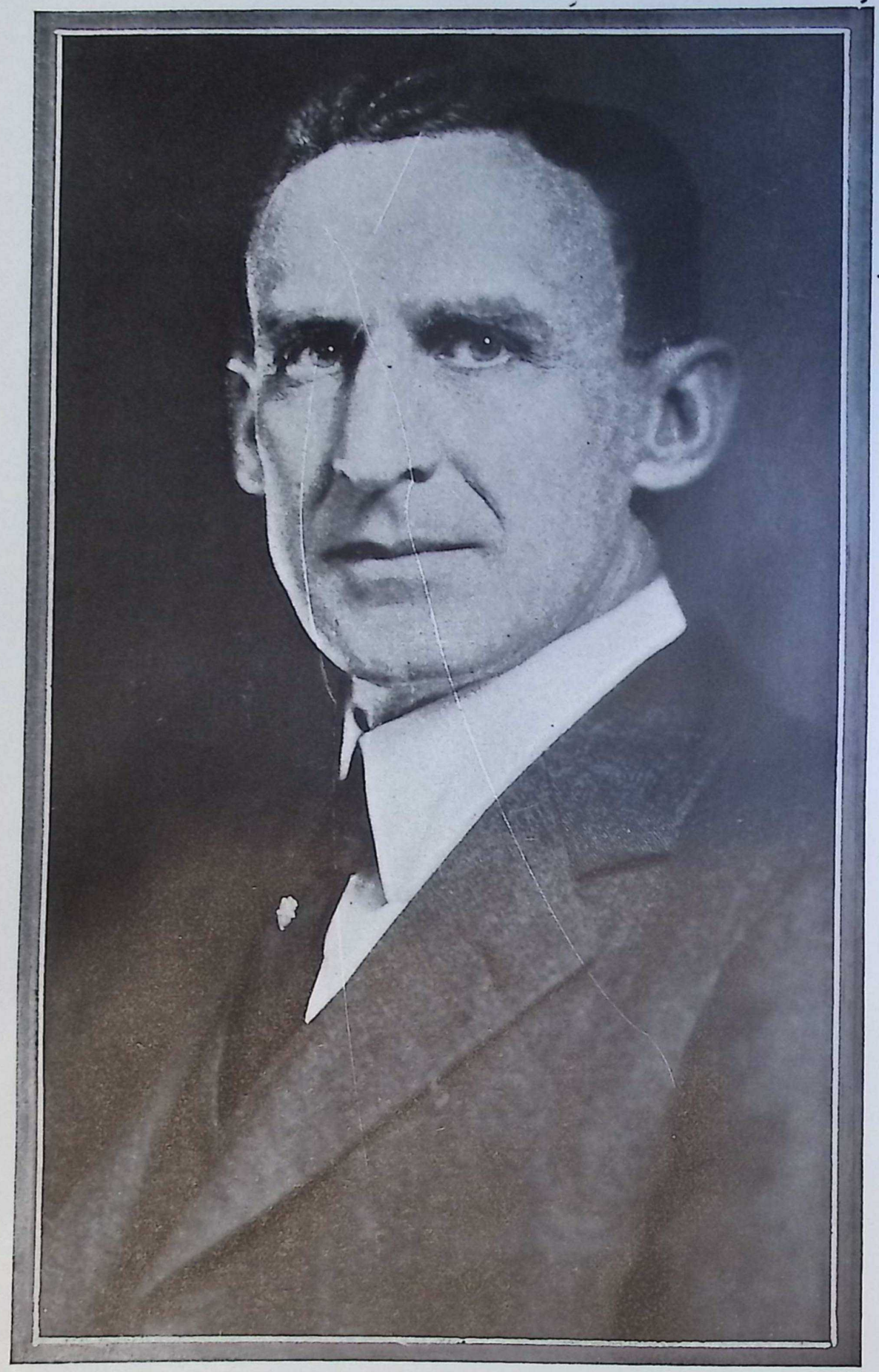
CARREL LOA
For Library Us
only!



Rev. Richard T. Gillespie, D. D., LL. D.
1879 - 1930

THE LIFE AND WORK OF RICHARD T. GILLESPIE IN THE FIELD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Emory University

By

Richard T. Gillespie, Jr.
A.B., Presbyterian College, 1930
B.D., Columbia Theological Seminary, 1933

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement of the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

EMORY UNIVERSITY, GEORGIA
May, 1938.

* MI 1.9 G478 G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	1
II.	RICHARD T. GILLESPIE - THE YEARS OF PREPARATION .	8
	Hereditary background	8
	His parents	11
	Early home life	15
	Elementary schooling.	17
	Secondary schooling	19
	College life.	23
	Student at Columbia Theological Seminary . .	28
III.	THE PERSONAL SIDE OF HIS LIFE	34
	Chronological survey of his ministry	34
	Florence, South Carolina	34
	Lexington, Kentucky	36
	Louisville, Kentucky	40
	Columbia Theological Seminary	42
	Personal characteristics.	43
	McPheeters' description	43
	Self-control and self-confidence	44
	Vision.	45
	Executive ability	46
	Unsparing energy.	47
	Patience and tenacity of prupose	48

CHAPTER PAGE

Faith and prayer. 49
Loyalty and devotion to his calling 50
Family life 51
Home interests 52
Religion in the home 57
Discipline 58
Vacations 59
Later years 61
IV. HIS WORK AS PASTOR IN THE LOCAL CHURCH 67
The churches served 67
Florence, South Carolina 67
Maxwell Street Church, Lexington, Kentucky . 68
First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky 70
Educational work 72
The Sunday School 72
Other educational agencies 77
Pastoral, evangelistic and community work . . . 81
Pastoral work 81
Evangelistic work 87
Community work 90
Financial and administrative 92
V. HIS WORK AS PREACHER 98
Theology 99
Points of doctrinal emphasis 100
Points of practical emphasis 106

CHAPTER PAGE

Methods of sermonizing 110
Evangelistic series 112
General observations on sermons 113
Public prayer 115
Delivery and effect 116
VI. HIS WORK AS PRESBYTER 118
His work in South Carolina 118
The Kentucky Educational Movement 124
Other work 138
VII. HIS WORK AS PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA SEMINARY . . . 144
Historical sketch of the Seminary 144
Beginnings of the Seminary. 144
Connections with Old School Assembly 146
The founding of the Southern Presbyterian Church 148
Theological controversy 150
Later years 151
The removal to Atlanta 152
Earlier efforts at removal 152
First call to Gillespie 154
Action of the Board and controlling Synods . 155
Second call to Gillespie 158
The financial campaigns 162
Two years of transition 167
Gillespie and the new Columbia 174
Opening in Decatur 174

CHAPTER PAGE

The centennial year 176

Relation with other Seminaries 179

Academic changes 182

Work with the students 188

Financial difficulties 192

The end 196

VIII. CONCLUSION 198

BIBLIOGRAPHY 209

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The subject of this thesis was suggested to the writer by the faculty adviser in his work for the Masters' Degree. The writer had hoped that sometime he might be able to bring his father's papers together in some form, but it had not occurred to him to do this as the work of a thesis requirement. Since the writer's graduate work was being done in the field of Religious Education, however, the suggestion made an immediate appeal to him.

It should be stated frankly that the first appeal which the suggestion made was a personal one. It was the natural filial desire which the writer had, to put in writing the story of his father's life and work. The writer realized it would be difficult to deal with so personal a subject in producing a document which would have objective validity, and one of the first notes he made in selecting this subject was as follows: "Here I realize I must take care to make the study objective and scientific, reducing the personal element as far as possible to a minimum." It has been impossible to do this completely, and the writer confesses without apology that there were times when his emotions were deeply moved, as he put together the story of his father's life.

A more important reason for the choice of this subject was the writer's feeling that such a study would put flesh and blood around much of the academic work which he had done in residence. In these studies, the writer had approached the field of Religious Education from several different angles.[1] The first approach was made in a course on the Theory of Religious Education, in which a general survey was made of the problems in this field, both past and present, and in which Christian Education was defined by the Professor as

> the term used to include the work of all persons, who through worship, instruction, and directed experience, seek (1) to help growing persons to sense their need of and definitely to surrender or personally commit their lives to God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and (2) to so guide them that they will grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior, with new insights gained as to the meaning of a Christ centered life and more effective steps taken to make possible spiritual renewing in all areas of life, individual, ecclesiastical, industrial and social.[2]

Another approach was made in the study of the Psychology of Religion. Here the basic text was Pratt's The Religious Consciousness, and the study involved such problems as the nature of religion, the problem and method of

---

[1]The distinction between the terms "Religious Education" and "Christian Education" in this paper is one of degree rather than kind. Generally speaking, the latter term has a more limited connation and is the term more accurately descriptive of Gillespie's life and work.

[2]Lavens M. Thomas II. Emory University, Georgia.

the psychology of religion, society and the individual, the development of religion in the individual, psycho-analysis, and mysticism. After an investigation of the "natural" elements in religious experience of adolescents, the writer set down his conviction that,

> The religious educator must recognize the natural forces at work in the life of the adolescent. Nor must these forces be considered as merely natural. They are the divine forces through which God does his work in the life of the individual. The old trilogy of the intellect, emotions, and will, may have been set aside as far as the theory of "faculty" psychology is concerned, but they still describe the channels through which the divine forces operate in the life experience of man. And it is in youth when they are in the stage of greatest fertility and expansion that these channels may be so laid that God's Spirit may do his work in all the years to follow. The recognition of this fact in the beginning, and the understanding of those forces which have been described above will carry the educator far along in his task. And without such recognition, or without knowledge of the life forces surging through the adolescent, he will be as the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into the ditch.[3]

Another approach which the writer made was in a study of the Philosophy of Education. In this course he became acquainted with the influence of empirical philosophy on modern educational thought and with the Dewey-Kilpatrick theory of "progressive education" as taught at the Teachers' College, Columbia University. He also came to see how some

---

[3]Term Paper. "The Psychology of Adolescence as Related to Religious Education", submitted to L. M. Thomas II., Emory University, by Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., December 1934. pp. 15-16. In Personal Files of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr.

of these methods were being brought over with good effect into the religious educational program of the church. However, the writer's own Calvinistic background, and the influence of Karl Barth's theology made it impossible for him to go all the way with the empiricists. In a study of the educational philosophy of John Calvin, the writer stated that,

> In my opinion the experimentalist philosophy is a good one as a working hypothesis in the development of human personality through the continuous reconstruction of experience, but I think that human personality is tremendously enriched when it stands with Calvin before a Transcendent God, believing that ultimate Truth is in Him.[4]

In this connection the writer also made a study in the field of ethics, in which the various types of ethical theory were considered in relation to their metaphysical presuppositions. The theory finally worked out as the most tenable was that of Idealistic Perfectionism based on the reality in life of a system of moral values.

Other studies which the writer made in the field of Religious Education were the curriculum, worship, organization and administration, and methods of research. He also

---

[4]Term Paper. "The Educational Philosophy and Correlative Educational Scheme of John Calvin", submitted to S. G. Brinkley, Emory University, by Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., December 1934. p. 18. In Personal Files of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr.

made a study of contemporary social movements and their implications for Christianity and the church.

When all of this was finished, however, there still remained the question, "Well, what is Christian education, and how can it best be achieved today?" The following chapters are the writer's attempt to find an answer to that question. At the time of writing, he was in the early years of his ministry and was beginning to face the practical problems of Christian Education as they are found in the pastorate. The writer felt it would be natural to expect some answer to his question in the life and work of his father, who spent twenty-two years in the ministry as pastor and as president of a theological seminary. It is now his conviction that Christian Education will always be best defined in terms of the life and work of those who give themselves to it. In making this study, however, the writer has sought to rid himself of his presuppositions, and to tell the story in an accurate and authoritative way. He has also sought, wherever possible, to bring out the implications for Christian Education. In looking for these implications, he has sought to keep before him the following objectives which have been formulated by the International Council of Religious Education:[5]

---

[5]Paul H. Vieth, Objectives in Religious Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930). 331 pp.

1. The development of a God-consciousness, and the proper relationship to Him.

2. An understanding and appreciation of the personality, life, and teachings of Jesus, and a conscious acceptance of him and loyalty to his cause.

3. A progressive development of Christ-like character.

4. The ability and disposition to share in the building of a Christian Social order.

5. The ability and disposition to participate effectively in the life and work of the church.

6. A Christian interpretation of life and the universe, and the development of a Christian philosophy of life.

7. A knowledge of the Bible and other religious heritages of the race.

Most of the data for the thesis has come from the personal files of Gillespie, which were in the writer's possession, from the files of Columbia Seminary for the years of Gillespie's administration, and from the writer's correspondence, interviews, and recollections. In the case of the references from the Personal Files, the writer has taken each original, has given it the symbol indicated in the footnote, and has collected all of these in a file, to be placed in the library of Columbia Seminary. These are lettered from L to T, with the numerals indicating the page number in the file. In the reference from the Seminary Files, the material has been copied from the originals and has been placed in another file with the same system as was used with the personal papers. These letters run from A to I, and in each case, these transcriptions are so annotated

as to give an accurate reference to the originals. Such papers as the Sermon Files and Personal Scrapbooks are still in the writer's possession.

The work for this degree was done on the Anna Church Whitner Fellowship, which was granted to the writer by the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary on his graduation from that institution. Since Gillespie had been instrumental in securing the Fellowship for the Seminary, it seemed appropriate that this thesis should deal with the story of his life and work. A scholarship was also generously granted by the Faculty of Emory University. The writer wishes to express his gratitude to the faculties of both institutions for these awards, to President J. McDowell Richards of Columbia for his cooperation in making the Seminary records available, and to numerous friends and relatives whose contributions have been documented.

CHAPTER II

THE YEARS OF PREPARATION

Hereditary background. Richard Thomas Gillespie was born on his father's plantation in York County, South Carolina, October 23, 1879. A study of his life must go behind this date, however. John Wesley once told his friend, Adam Clark, that "if I were to write my own life I should begin it before I was born." That is true of us all, for in a certain sense, a man's destiny is determined long before his birth by the strong forces of heredity and environment.

> The name Gillespie is believed to have been of Scottish derivation and was taken from the Gaelic name of Gillespuig or Gille-Espuaig, meaning "attendant or servant of the bishop". . . . Although the family bearing this name originated in Scotland, it was to be found at early dates, not only in the Scottish counties of Lanark and Fife, but also in the English county of Leicester and in various parts of Ireland, whither branches of the family went from Scotland. These families were, for the most part, of the landed gentry and yeomanry of the British Isles.[1]

Among the early Gillespies, the best known was George Gillespie, who at the age of thirty was appointed one of the four Scotch commissioners to the famous Westminster Assembly. This was the Assembly which drew up the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian church between the years 1643 and 1648.

---

[1] The Name and Family of Gillespie, Compiled by the Media Research Bureau, Washington, D.C. p. 2.

The story is told that in the course of its deliberations, the Assembly came to the point where it was to formulate a definition for God. All declined to attempt a definition; whereupon George Gillespie, the youngest member of the Assembly, was called on to lead in prayer. The opening words of his prayer, "O God, thou who art a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, having in thy Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth . . ." were immediately accepted by the Assembly as an answer to his prayer, and were set down in the Shorter Catechism. After serving pastorates at Wemyes and at Edinburgh, his brilliant career was cut short by early death at the age of thirty-six.[2]

The line of Richard T. Gillespie goes back to the branch of the family which settled in Rowan County, North Carolina. Of these settlers it has been said,

> The early settlers of Rowan County were religious people, and in many instances the enjoyment of perfect liberty of conscience was the great object they were seeking when they were making for themselves a home in the Western world . . . The Scotch Irish fled from the North of Ireland in consequence of disabilities imposed on them for the sake of their religion. They found a home in the fertile lands of Western Rowan; and with them they brought an intense love for their own peculiar doctrines and forms of worship.[3]

---

[2]Philip Schaaf, editor, A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal and Practical Theology (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883). II, 874.

[3]Jethro Rumple, A History of Rowan County, North Carolina, (Salisbury, North Carolina: J. J. Bruner, 1881, Republished, Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Co., 1929) p. 261.

The following record is found concerning one of the early Gillespie settlers,

> Thomas Gillespie was a man of sanguine temperament, and was very zealous in the cause of his Master. Nothing cheered him more than to see the Church lengthening her cords. He was gifted with the tongue and often exhorted his brethren at prayer meetings and such like places, to press forward in the Kingdom. In 1805 he became an elder in Back Creek. A few years afterward, he moved westward and his bones lie somewhere in Tenn.[4]

Again in the same source is found the record that "Time would fail to speak at length of the excellencies of . . . also Richard Gillespie, and of his son James A. Gillespie, who were beloved and highly esteemed."[5] In another place is found the record that,

> Robert Gillespie purchased a large number of lots in Salisbury about 1757 . . . Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie had two children, Margaret, who became the wife of Rev. Jamie T. McCorkle D.D., so long the pastor of Thyatira. The other was a son named Richard Gillespie, who was a Captain in the Revolutionary War and died unmarried.[6]

Thus on his paternal side, Gillespie came from a people who lived the simple life of Southern planters, fervent in their patriotism and strong in their religious convictions.

---

[4]Letter from Mrs. Annie Rankin Carr to R.T.G., December 9, 1926, In Seminary Files, E-55. Quoting History of Thyatira Church, p. 19.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid, Quoting Jethro Rumple, Op. Cit. p. 181.

On his maternal side, he was descended from the James family of Virginia. Among these was a Captain John James who was a soldier of the Revolution. The Jameses came down from Virginia bringing wealth and culture. They settled along the Wateree River in the "high hills of the Santee", a historic section of South Carolina. They were of the fox hunting, horse racing type of English descent. John James' will, now on record in Sumter County, South Carolina, names his race horses. This man was Gillespie's great, great grandfather. His maternal grandfather was William H. Bryan, a lawyer, and a captain in the Confederacy, giving his life to the cause.[7]

His parents. The home into which Gillespie was born had been built by his paternal grandfather, on an inherited plantation in York County. After the War between the States, his father, Richard T. Gillespie, Sr., returned home to recoup the broken fortunes of the family. When he was thirty-six, he met Minnie Bryan of Sumter County, South Carolina. They were soon married and he brought her back to the family place.

According to his daughter, Gillespie Sr. "was conservative in his nature and undemonstrative in his feelings,

---

[7]Louise Gillespie (Mrs. W. T.) Brock, Sketch of Gillespie Ancestry, In Personal Files, P-1.

but one knew that his affections were very deep.[8] In a letter written to his son in 1910, when Richard Jr., (the writer of this paper), was six months old, Gillespie Sr. said:

> I would be glad to see you all but I expect it will be a good while before I get to Florence again. I am sure I would like to see the little boy with his little mouth open and his hands on his mother's face securing a kiss. I know he would look sweet. I hope and pray that he may live to grow up to be a blessing to his country. When you were a little fellow like him, you would do a heap of little smart things, and I have prayed daily and hoped that you might live to grow up to be a useful Christian man and my prayers have been answered and hopes realized and I am proud of you as well as the rest of my children and I would rather be poor and have you all for children than to be the richest man in Rock Hill.[9]

For many years he was an elder in the Ebenezer Church in York County, and while he was not gifted in public speech, yet he was always regular and faithful in his church activities. His daughter says that because of his timidity he would not lead in public prayer, but she adds, "I can recall him always, late at night, reading the Bible and kneeling in prayer all to himself. Even after I was grown, I have glimpsed him in his room in prayer."[10] The only time she

---

[8]Louise Gillespie Brock, Sketch of Gillespie's Early Home Life, In Personal Files, P-2.

[9]Letter of Richard T. Gillespie, Sr., to R.T.G., January 26, 1910, In Personal Files, P-3.

[10]Louise Gillespie Brock, Op. Cit. In Personal Files, P-2.

ever heard him pray aloud was after he was eighty years old. During a special church effort to establish family altars in the homes, she says that he responded to the pastor's appeal and offered a prayer in the presence of her mother and herself. "The prayer was an epitome of all the beautiful prayers he had ever heard, it seemed to me, prayers he had stored up in his heart through all the years."[11] Though thus reserved himself, three of his four sons entered the ministry.

The greatest interest at the end of his life was his son's Presidency of Columbia Seminary. He was keenly disappointed when Gillespie refused the first call, and when the call was renewed six months later, he said in a characteristic way, "If the Lord hasn't called you, there is certainly nothing to hinder him from calling you."[12]

Sometime after his death, his son wrote concerning him,

> Just a year ago my father who had reached the ripe age of eighty-four years passed away after an illness of more than a year. He had always been strong and vigorous and had not in the first eighty-three years of his life known a day of illness. He made a hard fight and died like a good soldier. Two nights before his death we were alone. He said to me, "I have tried

---

[11] Louise Gillespie Brock, Op. Cit. In Personal Files, P-2.

[12] A letter from Jessie Van Meter to R.T.G., December 2, 1924, In Seminary Files, J-3.

> to live an honorable life and have never done nor said anything which I could not have done or said in the presence of your mother and her children.[13]

Gillespie's mother was a woman of ability and of much devotion of spirit. There were six children, of whom Richard Thomas was the oldest. According to her daughter, she was kind, gentle, and unselfish, and made her children her first thought. It seemed to rest upon her as a sacred duty to instruct them in every way. "We used to think her a little hard, but her exacting requirements were to our advantage."[14] She was a lover of learning and of nature. The writer recalls, as a college boy, stories she would tell him of her college days, and of the diligence with which she was required to study. The daughter says that her recollection of her mother is always in connection with books and flowers. "She taught us to like reading, and to value education. Flowers were a part of our life."[15]

Like her husband, she was reserved in her disposition, and according to her daughter "was not even inclined to express in words her love for us."[16] Her real attitude, how-

---

[13]Letter from R.T.G. to R. L. Alexander, April 28, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-1.

[14]Louise Gillespie Brock, Op. Cit., In Personal Files, P-2.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

ever, was expressed in an incident which Gillespie reports, when he first told his mother of his decision to enter the ministry. Evidently his decision was a surprise, for his sister says she knew nothing of it till she read it in the church paper. Gillespie writes,

> After I had been received under care of Presbytery I went to my home for a brief visit. I was then a student at college. When my mother met me on the porch and I told her what had brought me she threw her arms around me and said she had dedicated me at birth to the ministry and that her constant prayer through all the years had been that God might use me. That hour in her loving embrace is a loving memory which I cherish.[17]

Early home life. The first years of Gillespie's life were spent on his father's plantation. The home has been described by his sister as a typical old Southern home, white with tall chimneys, long front porch, square posts, and kitchen out in the yard. The land was very hilly with all kinds of woods, and with creeks, branches, and springs. The land close to the house was not farmed, and in the distance were the barns and stables. The place was also equipped with a gin, a blacksmith shop, a mill and supply store. Here and there over the place were negro cabins as they were in slavery time, and the old negroes were former slaves.

---

[17]Letter from R.T.G. to Melrose Avery, October 15, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-2.

Writing to Gillespie, Jr., she says:

> I wish I could take you with me when as a little girl with your father, two years older, we went fishing, climbed the hills, hunted rabbits, visited the orchards, waded in the creeks, gathered nuts, listened to the negroes tell stories of ghosts and other things, or listened to the plantation songs of the negroes as they rode home in the wagons late in the afternoon from the cotton fields. Too I see the open fires with the big back logs, as we gathered in the evenings. In the summer we often sat out under the skies, and our mother told us about the stars, just as she told us of many other things.[18]

During these years, she says that her brother was somewhat reserved and even as a little boy maintained a certain dignity. At times, however, he was given to teasing, and was often getting into mischief. One of his worst faults, as she recalls, was slipping out and smoking rabbit tobacco cigarettes.

Religion played a large part in his early home life, and the sister says that as she looks back, it seemed such a natural part of the home life that it can scarcely be distinguished by itself. Most of the discipline and religious training was left in the hands of the mother, and Sunday afternoons were spent with her, studying the Bible, the hymns, and the catechism. All the family went to church every Sunday, alternating on preaching Sundays with their own church at Ebenezer, six miles away, and with the

---

[18]Louise Gillespie Brock, On. Cit. In Personal Files, P-2.

Associate Reformed Presbyterian at Tirzah nearby. The Sunday Schools were the old fashioned type where, after the lesson, the Superintendent gathered the whole school together for his closing admonition. Their pastor was Dr. James H. Thornwell, a saintly man, who ministered to the church for many years. Speaking of him, the sister says,

> He walked in love among us and was held in great esteem. He was veritably a good shepherd. I have never heard such a voice, low and gentle, as he preached the simple truths, mostly from Paul's epistles, the Psalms, and the Proverbs. No greater honor could come to the home than to have a visit from the pastor.[19]

It was in such an atmosphere that Gillespie spent his early years. The sister writes that these were happy, comfortable years, in which all the needs of the family were abundantly supplied. The writer recalls that his father often spoke of these years with tender affection, and one of the unfulfilled hopes of his life was that he might take his own sons back to "the old home place" and that together they might roam over the haunts of his childhood days.

Elementary schooling. Gillespie's first schooling was in the home, with his mother as his teacher. His sister writes that the school was too far away for them to attend as little children, and that her mother taught them for the

---

[19]Louise Gillespie Brock, Op. Cit. In Personal Files, P-2.

first few years. She says that the bell rang promptly at nine and that they went through a regular routine until twelve. They were made to be thorough, but learned to enjoy their work. The Bible was always included in the curriculum, and even in the summer, Bible verses and hymns had to be studied before they could go out to play.[20]

These were the days before the development of the public school system in the South, and the schools were supported by the private subscriptions of the patrons. The elementary schools in York County during this period have been described as costing "a dollar a scholar per month", and as usually being taught by maiden ladies who came and lived among the various patrons for their board and lodging. School "took in" at eight and "turned out" at four, and many of the students would walk several miles to attend. The discipline was often strict, and indoctrination and drill were the chief methods of teaching. One of the books used was Swinton's Word Book, and another was the Dictionary. Since the community was so strongly Presbyterian, the Shorter Catechism was also a part of the curriculum.[21]

---

[20]Louise Gillespie Brock, Op. Cit. In Personal Files, P-2.

[21]Interview of the writer with W. A. McCulley, Sharon, South Carolina. Notes in Personal Files, P-5.

The writer recalls, as a child, hearing his father speak often of these school years, describing the long walks to school with his younger sister, and the rude features of the little country school house. On one occasion in later years, he brought home a Blue Back Speller to show his boys the kind of books he studied, and he would fascinate them by spelling out in the "old fashioned" way some of the long words he learned at school. One word which the writer particularly recalls was the word in-com-pre-hen-si-ble which he would spell out a syllable at a time, going back and repeating each syllable until the word was completed.

While Gillespie's elementary schooling seems quite simple compared to the modern standards of education today, yet the community in which he lived as a child was one of culture and background, and the foundation which he received seems to have been adequate for the training which was to follow.

Secondary schooling. When Gillespie was about fourteen years of age, his family left the farm and moved into the nearby town of Rock Hill, South Carolina, where better advantages could be secured for the children. Soon after moving to town, he went to work for a mercantile firm.[22]

---

[22]Roddey Mercantile Company, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

One of the men with whom he worked in this concern reports to the writer that,

> He came to us at the age of fifteen, as assistant in the office. He was bright, apt, quick, accurate, conscientious and dependable, and had sufficient control of himself when a customer slapped his right cheek to turn unto him his left. It gives me pleasure to tell you that I think he was the best office man that ever came under me for training. I do not remember just how long he was with me, but for several years, and he never made a single complaint at the long hours he and I had to stay at the work by ourselves.[23]

He later transferred to a hardware store,[24] and his manager there says of him,

> He worked for us just before he entered college. Though quite young he was a skilled accountant and a loyal young man. In every way his work was most satisfactory. He was a fine, clean young man and commanded the respect of all with whom he came in contact.[25]

To outward appearances, it looked as if Gillespie was settled in his life's work, but he had never given up the idea of going to college. In later years, he looked back on these years as an essential part of his preparation for his life's work. After becoming President of the Seminary, he wrote thus to a prospective student who was struggling with the problem of finishing his education,

---

[23]Letter from John A. Neely to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 21, 1938. In Personal Files, P-3.

[24]Rock Hill Hardware Company, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

[25]Letter from W. L. Barron to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., April 1, 1938. In Personal Files, P-4.

> I sincerely hope you will not become discouraged by the necessary delay in entering upon your preparation for the ministry. The work you are now doing will bring you a wealth of experience which will be of inestimable value through all the years of your active ministry, and you must not feel that you are suffering irreparable injury. Before entering college, I was actively engaged in business for eight years and after my college course spent another year at work. This delay meant I was twenty-eight years old when I graduated. It seemed hard at the time, but as I look back on the course I feel that my preparation for the position to which I have been appointed as President of the Seminary was made in those days which at the time seemed full of discouragement and disappointment. If you are fully consecrated to life service and are willing to leave the development to the guidance of Providence, I am sure God will not fail you and that you will receive direction when he is ready for you to go on.[26]

During these years, Gillespie took private tutoring from Professor Alexander R. Banks, headmaster of the Presbyterian High School of Rock Hill. Professor Banks was widely known as a teacher and "had great success and reputation in preparing students for college."[27] While held in high esteem, yet he was often caricatured because of his peculiarities. He has been described to the writer as a man of medium heavy build, with grey mustache, florid complexion, and grey hair, through which he was constantly running his fingers. He wore nose glasses to which was attached a black

---

[26]Letter from R.T.G. to C. H. Brannon, July 7, 1925, In Seminary Files, XBB-2.

[27]F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, editors, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850. (Columbia, South Carolina: The R. L. Bryan Co., 1926) p. 366.

silk ribbon, and he was none too neat in his dress. He smoked cigars, and there was a saying among the boys that "when he came in swallowing his tobacco juice" they had better watch out, for there was trouble brewing. Having a quick temper, he would sometimes seize a boy by the collar and thoroughly shake him and scold him. At other times, he would use ridicule and imitation when occasion offered. Some of the boys were afraid of him, and all of them knew that his word was law. While not a man of broad learning, yet he was thoroughly familiar in the fields of Mathematics, Latin, and Greek which he taught, and it is said that he knew Harkness' Latin Grammar by heart. In spite of his peculiarities, Professor Banks was respected as an educator and achieved results with students. It has been said of him that he knew boys; that he could inspire a desire in them to learn; that he could inspire in them a desire to go on to college; and that generally speaking, his students who went off to college made good.[28] He took a special interest in those who came to him for private lessons, and the writer remembers his father expressing, on more than one occasion, his gratitude to Professor Banks for the tutoring he had given him. According to his sister, Gillespie gave up his office

---

[28]Interview with C. A. McCulley, Loc. Cit.

work in order to attend the regular classes in Professor Banks' school, the session before entering college. When he finally went off to college, he was sufficiently advanced to enter the Sophomore class.

College life. Gillespie entered Davidson College when he was twenty-one years of age. He faced many difficulties in doing so, and in a letter to the President of the college some years later, he said,

> Had it not been for your advice, and the encouragement which you gave me in an hour of discouragement over finances, I am sure I would have dropped out of college at the end of the fall term of my first year.[29]

In order to meet their financial needs, Gillespie and his roommate became campus representatives for various student commodities. They had agencies for clothing, fraternity pins, fountain pens, athletic equipment, and other essentials of college life. In a letter to the writer, the roommate says, "It just so happened that we were both in the same boat insofar as finances were concerned, in that each of us had to work our way through school."[30] During one of their summers, they made money travelling through Virginia together, selling stereoptican views. In the

---

[29]Letter from R.T.G. to Henry Louis Smith, June 5, 1925, In Seminary Files, E-20.

[30]Letter from Natt Wagner to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 28, 1938, In Personal Files, P-6.

course of the next two years, Gillespie built up a business of such size that he could turn it over to his younger brothers for financing their way through school. Concerning this he said,

> During my college and Seminary days . . . it was necessary not only to help with matters at home but to maintain a fatherly oversight over the younger brothers looking forward to and working for a college education.[31]

The courses which he studied were those found in the usual liberal arts college of that day, and among his papers there are notebooks in Chemistry, English, French, Philosophy and Bible. The notes are neatly made and give evidence of his being a careful student. The notes relating to religion show that those courses were taught entirely from the orthodox point of view. In order to finish in three years, he doubled up on some of his courses. Writing of this some years later he said, "I have always regretted that I forced my course in college and condensed it into a three year course."[32]

The record of his student activities is found in the college annual of 1904. He was on the query committee of the Eumanean Literary Society, was chairman of the finance

---

[31]Letter of R.T.G. to R. L. Alexander, April 9, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-1.

[32]Letter of R.T.G. to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 10, 1927, In Personal Files, L-10.

committee for the Y.M.C.A., was one of the Business Managers of the Davidson College Magazine, and was a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity.[33] While Gillespie was a loyal fraternity man, yet he did not let fraternity lines limit his friendships. One of his classmates, not of his fraternity, has written concerning him,

> During our school days my associations with your father were at no time and in no way intimate. Yet my regard and esteem for him was cordial and great. For on numerous occasions he went out of his way to show himself to be my true friend. And that was, more than anything else, the inevitable expression of his unreservedly kindly and generous nature. Any one of those who knew him in those days would gladly testify of this.[34]

The writer recalls that during his own college days, his father warned him against the danger of allowing his fraternity affiliations absorb too much of his interest and time to the thwarting of other worthwhile friendships on the campus. In the annual letters which the members of his class published for several years after graduation, he wrote,

> The best in college life after all is the loving friendship growing out of it, which already is becoming stronger each day, as the little rivalries and jealousies are forgotten, and the fellowship of college days

---

[33] Quips and Cranks, Davidson College Annual, Volume VIII, 1904.

[34] Letter of E. D. Kerr to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 30, 1938, In Personal Files, P-8.

grows upon us.[35]

During the course of his years at Davidson, Gillespie became Secretary to the President, Dr. Henry Louis Smith, and spent several of his summers in field work for the college. Writing to Dr. Smith after he himself had become President of Columbia Seminary, Gillespie said,

> As I look back over the twenty-four years since I left home for Davidson College, no man with whom I have been associated has helped me more, and certainly no man has been a greater inspiration to me in my work than you have been. . . . Under your direction and influence, I became interested even while a student at Davidson in the problems of Christian Education. That interest has steadily grown until it has become the greatest passion of my life. God has given me the privilege of serving both in South Carolina and Kentucky, when someone even with small gifts was greatly needed in a place of leadership, and he has richly blessed me in every effort I have made.[36]

Among his college notebooks there is one which was evidently used by him in his work for the promotion of Davidson College and the cause of Christian Education. It is filled with clippings and notes concerning the cost and the value of higher education, and concerning the specific needs at Davidson College. According to notations in the book, the notes were the substance of an address delivered to a number

---

[35] Annual Letters of Class of Nineteen Hundred and Four, Davidson College, June 1905, pp. 15-16. In Personal Files, P-9.

[36] Letter of R.T.G. to Henry Louis Smith, June 5, 1925. In Seminary Files, E-20.

of churches during the summers of 1902-1903. Doubtless it was the influence of this work which finally led him to enter the ministry, for it was during these years that he made that decision. One of his college mates writing, says,

> Perhaps you know your father definitely decided to preach while he was a student. I believe I am the first person he told of his intention. We were going to chapel one morning and he told me of the decision made the night before.[37]

Gillespie dropped out of school a year between College and Seminary (1904-1905) in order to continue this field work for the college. He also travelled for the college during the summer after his first year in the Seminary. In The Annual Class Letters of that summer, he wrote from Orlando, Florida,

> When the Seminary closed, I stepped into my old harness again and have been at work ever since, recruiting for the college, begging the people to put both their boys and their money into this good investment.[38]

In the spring of 1907, President Smith wrote Gillespie, offering him the work but not insisting that he take it if he preferred to take charge of a church.[39] In the winter

---

[37]Letter of George Wilcox to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 10, 1938, In Personal Files, P-7.

[38]Annual Letters of Class of Nineteen Hundred and Four of Davidson College, July 1906, p. 13. In Personal Files, P-10.

[39]Letter of Henry Louis Smith to R.T.G., April 16, 1907, In Personal File, M-2a.

of his Senior year (1908), however, he wrote him again, saying that he could not find a satisfactory substitute, and urging him to forego the pastorate for the time, that he might take up field work again for the college.

> I know of no man, young or old, who is so peculiarly fitted by first-hand recent acquaintance with the college, by practical experience in such work, and by wide acquaintanceship, already formed, as well as by natural talent and inclination to make a success of this work. It is to do a great and permanent work for the interests of the Church; in difficulty such a work would surpass that of the pastorate; yet in general usefulness, I think it would surpass it to a much greater degree.[40]

Though Gillespie did not accept this work, his interest in the advancement of the college's interests never ceased, and in 1926 he was awarded membership in the Davidson Chapter of Omicron Delta Kappa leadership fraternity.

Student at Columbia Theological Seminary. Gillespie decided to attend Columbia Theological Seminary under the influence and advice of Professor W. M. McPheeters. This proved to be one of the important decisions of his life, because it later determined his views concerning the theological educational system of the church, and led eventually to the giving of his life in the cause of Columbia Seminary.

At the time he was ready to begin his Seminary course, Columbia was having a struggle for her existence. Less than

---

[40]Letter of Henry Louis Smith to R.T.G., February 26, 1908. In Personal Files, M-2.

a score of students were on the campus, and there were other theological institutions which apparently could offer far greater advantages. But Gillespie chose Columbia instead. In a memorial address, Dr. McPheeters tells the story of his appeal to Gillespie:

> When I approached him in regard to coming to the Seminary, the interests of the institution were about at their lowest ebb. The total student body numbered only sixteen - the Junior class which he entered numbered only six. The same year there was at Union Seminary, Virginia, an enrollment of seventy, and a Junior Class of twenty-five. The buildings in which the Seminary was then housed, while not without their beauty and attractiveness, were old. The rooms of the students were heated with grates. They had to carry in their own coal, make their own fires, take out the ashes and cinders. They had to get their water from a spout and take it to their rooms. The refectory was a dilapidated wooden structure, the floor of which was none too solid. The chapel had been built for a stable. The grounds were limited to four acres. On the other hand, Union Seminary at that time was housed in new and modern buildings. It had an attractive chapel, library and refectory, and spacious grounds. Dr. Gillespie was a student at Davidson College at the time and his friends and classmates there, some of them from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Florida, were all going to Union Seminary.
>
> In talking with him, I called his attention to the fact that the Seminary had been founded by his spiritual forebears; that it had ministered to the spiritual welfare of his forebears; that it was erected to meet the spiritual needs of those of his own people who were to come after him; that it had been built up by the self-denying labors and prayers of godly men and women - men and women of vision, who had their eye not merely on the present, but upon the future, who were seeking to serve not a limited locality, but an entire section of our common country. I also made it plain to him that if he turned away from the Seminary, his influence would inevitably be to lead others to do the same, and that that meant that, instead of helping to build up what his spiritual forebears had started at such great cost, he would be tearing down their work and rendering it nuga-

tory to the extent of his personal example and ability.[41]

That Gillespie never regretted the choice he made is shown by a letter which he wrote to a son of Dr. McPheeters many years later:

> While the student body was very small then, the memory of those days is precious. The one influence which brought me to the Seminary was a discussion with your father of the importance of saving Columbia until such time as the church would realize how essential it is and set themselves to the task of building here in the southeast, a strong, well-supported Seminary.[42]

Having chosen Columbia as his Seminary, he threw himself into her life and work. The curriculum of the seminary in that day included the disciplines of Systematic Theology, Hebrew and Greek, Old and New Testament Literature and Exegesis, Apologetics, Church Polity and Church History. Columbia Seminary had always been a stronghold of orthodox Calvinism, and all of Gillespie's theological training was in this heritage. Most of the work was of a doctrinal and exegetical nature, with apparently little emphasis on the practical subjects which have found a larger place in seminary curriculums of late. Judging from the notebooks which he left, there was also a strong emphasis on apologetics, in

---

[41] W. M. McPheeters, "Dr. Gillespie, the Student and Man", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, Vol. 24:2, 19-20.

[42] Letter of R.T.G. to T. S. McPheeters, January 12, 1927, In Seminary Files, C-5.

defense of the orthodox position. An examination of his notes indicates that, as in college, he was a careful and thorough student. One of his seminary mates recalls that he would arise before breakfast to read Hebrew with Dr. McPheeters, in non-credit work, for self improvement.[43]

During the term of 1907 and part of 1908, Gillespie served a mission church at Eastover, South Carolina, and organized a new church at Batesburg. He apparently kept in touch with these churches sometime after leaving them, for there are several letters from the members. One of them from Batesburg tells of the difficulties they had had and of the progress they had made.

> We have a couple of new members that will help us out financially when we get a new man to preach for us. Our little Sunday School is doing fine. We have a regular attendance of from twenty-five to thirty-three every Sunday. We have our lot paid for $600 and $1200 subscribed on the building.[44]

During his Seminary days, Gillespie took an active part in promoting the interests of the institution. One of his friends wrote him on his acceptance of the Presidency many years later, "I remember very well how the Seminary took on new life as a result of your devotion and activities

---

[43]Letter of E. D. Kerr to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 30, 1938. In Personal Files, P-8.

[44]Letter of J. A. Whitten to R.T.G., February 10, 1909, In Personal Files, P-11.

while you were there."[45] His chief project was the furnishing and equipping of a guest room and a mission room. He tells the story many years after, when attempting to raise money for the equipment of similar rooms in the new plant in Decatur:

> While I was a Senior at the Seminary in Columbia, I raised the money to refurnish, decorate, equip with electric lights, and furnish a guest room in one of the dormitories. The room was perfectly beautiful, and proved to be one of the most attractive features during a period of twenty years. It was known throughout the church as the "John G. Hall Guest Room", and a register was kept showing many interesting guests in the room.
>
> At the same time, we spent $400 equipping a club room for the Society of Missionary Inquiry. This money I raised also. The rooms adjoined and together they made an attractive parlor and bedroom. Until these rooms were equipped there was not a single place on the Columbia Campus where a guest could be received even, and no suitable place for entertainment. The first bulletin ever published at the Seminary was a three page bulletin carrying a picture of these two rooms, and a brief statement inviting ministers and others to be our guests. I have a copy of the bulletin framed in my office.[46]

He was anxious that all who were connected with the Seminary in any way should loyally support it and take an interest in its work. Writing, as President of the Seminary to one such, he says:

> I want you to feel as I did while a student at the

---

[45]Letter of A. C. Bridgeman to R.T.G., February 26, 1925, In Personal Files, E-3.

[46]Letter of R.T.G. to Mrs. Sumter Lewis, Chester, South Carolina, December 21, 1928, In Seminary Files, H-5.

> seminary that the life and work of the Seminary is an interest dear to your own heart, and I trust you will do everything you can from now on to improve the Seminary and to make it possible for us to render the largest service to our young men.[47]

One of his classmates and colleagues has observed of him that his diligence and earnestness of purpose anticipated for him his life of preeminent usefulness, and that he continued to the end with the same tireless devotion to each day's opportunities and duties.[48]

---

[47] Letter of R.T.G. to C. W. McCulley, September 28, 1927, In Seminary Files, A-9.

[48] Letter of E. D. Kerr to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Loc. Cit.

CHAPTER III

THE PERSONAL SIDE OF HIS LIFE

A study which seeks to bring out the implications in a man's life and work for the field of Christian Education would not be complete without a section on the personal side of his life. Phillips Brooks has succinctly defined preaching as "truth through personality", and it has been said of teaching that the curriculum is ninety per cent teacher. This chapter will include a chronological survey of Gillespie's ministry, a discussion of his personal characteristics, and a description of his family life.

I CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF HIS MINISTRY

Florence, South Carolina. Gillespie began his ministry in the spring of 1908, when he became pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Florence, South Carolina. On June twenty-fourth of that year, he was married to Elizabeth Hall of Rock Hill, South Carolina, and they remained in Florence until February 1, 1917. All of their children, Richard Thomas Jr., Robert Hall, and Mary Caroline, were born there.

Before accepting the Florence call, Dr. Henry Louis Smith, President of Davidson College, had urged him to take

up field work for the college,[1] and also Dr. E. O. Guerrant, head of the American Inland Mission in the Mountains of Kentucky, had invited him to become Secretary of the Mission, with the prospect of eventually becoming his successor.[2] While he was in Florence, pastorates were offered to him at Mt. Zion, South Carolina,[3] and in the Tenth Avenue Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.[4] His interest in educational matters had already shown itself, for he was offered, during these years, the headship of the Presbyterian High School in Blackshear, Georgia,[5] and the Presidency of Presbyterian College in South Carolina.[6] In addition to this, he was offered the position as superintendent of Home Missions in each of the Synods of North Carolina,[7] West

---

[1]Letter of Henry Louis Smith to R.T.G., February 26, 1908, In Personal Files, M-2.

[2]Letters of E. O. Guerrant to R.T.G., In Personal Files, November 13, 1907, M-1; March 17, 1909, M-3.

[3]Formal Call from Mt. Zion Church, March 5, 1911, In Personal Files, M-4.

[4]Letter of W. L. Wallis to R.T.G., May 7, 1913, In Personal Files, M-8.

[5]Letters of John T. Brantley and A. L. Patterson to R.T.G., April 14, 1911, In Personal Files, M-6, M-7.

[6]Letter of Alexander Martin to R.T.G., April 13, 1911, In Personal Files, M-5.

[7]Letter of A. A. McGeachy to R.T.G., February 25, 1914, In Personal Files, M-9.

Virginia,[8] and South Carolina,[9] and the position as field representative for the church schools in the Synod of Texas.[10] Finally, in 1916, while he was considering a call to the Maxwell Street Church, Lexington, Kentucky, President Thornton Whaling of Columbia Seminary wrote, urging him not to take it, in order that he might accept a place as his assistant at the Seminary.[11] It can be seen that most of the calls offered him demanded executive and administrative ability, and would have taken him out of the pastorate. But he did not feel that his work in Florence was finished, and did not consent to leave until a committee from the Maxwell Street Church, Lexington, Kentucky, offered him that pastorate.

Lexington, Kentucky. Gillespie took up his work in Lexington on February 1, 1917, at the age of thirty-seven. He had hoped, in accepting this call, to be relieved of some of the Presbyterial duties which had been placed on him in

---

[8]Letter of D. P. McGeachy to R.T.G., August 29, 1916, In Personal Files, M-13.

[9]Letter of E. E. Gillespie to R.T.G., November 3, 1916, In Personal Files, M-16.

[10]Letter of R.T.G. to T. W. Currie, July 12, 1915, In Personal Files, M-12.

[11]Letter of Thornton Whaling to R.T.G., December 4, 1916, In Personal Files, M-17.

South Carolina, but he had not been there long when he was made Chairman and Treasurer of the Committee on Schools and Colleges in the Synod. This was a work which was later to develop into his main contribution to the work of the church-at-large during his stay in Kentucky.

He had been in his new field less than a year when President Whaling of Columbia Seminary wrote him again, asking him to come assist him with the raising of some money, and stating that he was planning the next year to have him elected to the faculty. "I need you in a thousand different ways," he wrote, "and you ought to be in training for the Presidency of the Seminary, anyhow."[12] In answering that he was unable to accept, Gillespie said, "Nothing could ever give me more joy than to have a small part in building the Seminary into a great institution, and I cannot express the sincere regret with which I write you this letter."[13] The call was again urgently pressed by Dr. Whaling from time to time in the two years which followed,[14] and Pro-

---

[12]Letter of Thornton Whaling to R.T.G., November 26, 1917, In Personal Files, M-19.

[13]Letter of R.T.G. to Thornton Whaling, November 28, 1917, In Personal Files, M-19a.

[14]Letters of Thornton Whaling to R.T.G., In Personal Files, May 17, 1919, M-27; October 31, 1919, M-31; February 19, 1920, M-34.

fessor Reed, of the faculty, wrote him:

> It is an open secret here that Dr. Whaling had in mind to try to get you to give up your church and accept a place in the Faculty of Columbia Seminary. I am sure you will be reluctant to let go of a work that is so fruitful, and no doubt your church will be equally reluctant to consent to your letting go. One assumes considerable responsibility to ask you to do it. But I have thought the matter over quite a good deal, and I find myself willing to assume such a responsibility.[15]

However, none of these appeals were able to move Gillespie from his work at this time. In answering these calls, he said in one place:

> I have had several opportunities to make a change during the past year, but have not considered any of them for a moment. It has been my honest conviction that I should not at present leave this church and the work which I have undertaken here. I have been here just two years, and could well spend three more, but in the meantime, I think it is possible to get the work here in such shape that I might be able to leave it after April first, 1920. In saying this, I realize that I must go or stay at any time that in the providence of God it may seem my duty to do so.[16]

Some of the other opportunities of which he was speaking were: a call to the Presidency of Daniel Baker College, Austin, Texas, in 1918;[17] the Old Stone Church, Lewis-

---

[15]Letter of R. C. Reed to R.T.G., July 18, 1919, In Personal Files, M-30.

[16]Letter of R.T.G. to Thornton Whaling, January 31, 1919, In Personal Files, M-24a.

[17]Letter of T. P. Junkin to R.T.G., April 11, 1918, In Personal Files, M-20.

burg, West Virginia, in 1918;[18] and for a second time, the Superintendency of Home Missions in the Synod of South Carolina, in January 1919.[19] Other pastorates which were offered him were First Church, Savannah, Georgia,[20] Second Church, Charleston, South Carolina,[21] and Westminster Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.[22] In 1920, he was again asked by the Synod of South Carolina to take charge of the Home Mission work and also to become Manager of the newly established Presbyterian Progressive Program in the Synod.[23] The following year, he was asked to become one of the Secretaries in the Assembly's Stewardship office at Chattanooga, for the Assembly-wide promotion of the Progressive Program. This work especially appealed to him and he was strongly tempted to accept it, but was dis-

---

[18]Committee Resolution, October 17, 1918, In Personal Files,

[19]Letter of E. E. Gillespie to R.T.G., January 25, 1919, In Personal Files, M-26.

[20]Letter of S. P. Quaterman to R.T.G., February 17, 1920, In Personal Files, M-33.

[21]Letter of T. A. Legare to R.T.G., January 4, 1921, In Personal Files, M-40.

[22]Letter of H. C. Alexander to R.T.G., February 27, 1921, In Personal Files, M-43.

[23]Letter of E. E. Gillespie to R.T.G., October 14, 1920, In Personal Files, M-37.

suaded for various reasons.[24] A study of these calls again reveals that his executive and administrative ability was in frequent demand.

Louisville, Kentucky. Gillespie accepted a call to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, on November first, at the age of forty-two. The church was in the midst of a building program, moving from a downtown location to the Southern part of the city. During the summer and fall of 1922, a million dollar campaign for the Presbyterian Schools and Colleges in the Synod of Kentucky was launched under a Commission of which he was Chairman.[25] In the fall of the same year, the new building of his church was dedicated.[26] The strain of the building program and of the educational campaign together proved too much for his strength, and in December of that year he was forced to take a two month's leave because of illness. During the following year, he did not entirely recover his strength and was forced to take another leave during the first three months of 1924.

---

[24]There is no correspondence regarding this, but the information is given by his wife, Elizabeth H. Gillespie.

[25]Cf. Chapter V of this thesis.

[26]Cf. Chapter IV of this thesis.

He returned from this second illness greatly strengthened and, soon after this, received his first call to the Presidency of Columbia Seminary.[27] At that time, no decision had been made concerning the proposed removal of the Seminary from Columbia, South Carolina, and he refused the call, feeling that no one should undertake the Presidency until this issue was settled. During the summer and fall of that year, it was definitely decided that the Seminary should be moved, and a second call was offered him.[28] After due consideration, he announced early in December that he would accept the call.[29] This was, perhaps, the greatest decision of his life, and he made it out of no desire to leave the pastorate, but of a deep sense of vocation. Some months earlier, when the call was first presented, he had written a member of the faculty,

> I have no desire to give up the pastorate, and the field here is one of unusual opportunity. My family are all quite happy and satisfied in Louisville, and it will be difficult for me to leave at this time, though not impossible so far as I can see at present. If I should become president of anything, it will be from a compelling necessity and not from personal

---

[27]Letter of J. O. Reavis to R.T.G., May 15, 1924, In Personal Files, T-27.

[28]Letter of R.T.G. to J. S. Lyons, November 29, 1924, In Personal Files, T-28.

[29]Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, December 9, 1924, In Personal Files, T-29.

choice.[30]

Columbia Theological Seminary. Gillespie took up his new work with the Seminary on February 1, 1925, at the age of forty-five. A campaign for a quarter million dollars was launched in the Presbytery of Atlanta that same month, and a campaign for a similar amount was continued throughout the Synod of Georgia in the months which followed. The successful completion of both these efforts assured the removal of the Seminary to Decatur in the fall of 1927. During these two years, Gillespie kept his home in Decatur and commuted between there and Columbia.[31] But when the Seminary buildings had finally been completed and the removal accomplished, his work once more proved too much of a physical strain on him, and he went down with a serious attack of hypothyroidism. During the early part of 1928, he underwent two operations for removal of parts of the thyroid gland, but he was never able to completely recover his former health and strength. The financial and administrative problems caused by the move continued to be a heavy strain during the next two years. He suffered a serious streptococcus infection of the throat, in the spring of 1930, but appar-

---

[30]Letter of R.T.G. to H. R. Murchison, May 22, 1924, In Seminary Files, B-1.

[31]Cf. Chapter VI of this thesis.

ently had recovered and was able to attend the Commencement Exercises of the Seminary, where he made his final address to the graduating class. After this, he decided to attend the Sessions of the General Assembly, meeting in Charlottesville, Virginia. There he was stricken again, and died on the thirtieth of May at the age of fifty years.

Gillespie received the honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Centre College (Kentucky) in 1921 and the Doctor of Laws Degree from Presbyterian College (South Carolina) in 1925.

II. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

McPheeters' Description. Professor W. M. McPheeters, Gillespie's teacher and colleague, has thus described him in a memorial address:[32]

> The impressions made by the outer man in the case of Richard Thomas Gillespie were altogether in his favor. He was above the average height, stood erect and firmly upon his feet, was well-proportioned, carried himself with easy, unconscious dignity. He had a finely formed head, eyes that were sufficiently apart, a forehead that suggested a vigorous mentality, a nose that is usually associated with strength and aggressiveness, a chin and mouth that bespoke firmness and steadfastness of purpose. His voice fell distinctly and pleasantly upon the ear. His whole appearance commanded respect and invited confidence.
>
> In his case the outer man did not belie the characteristics of the inner man. He had not a brilliant and

---

[32]Those who are familiar with Dr. McPheeters and his insistence on accuracy and precision in exegetical work, will be satisfied that any statement from him, even on a memorial occasion, will have objective value.

versatile mind, but what, for the purpose of the work-a-day world in which we live, is perhaps better, namely - an alert, vigorous, well-balanced mind.

His speech did not sparkle with wit, nor was it salted and seasoned with humor; it was, however, simple, unaffected, direct. His words were well chosen, his sentences clear cut, and both alike were suited to convey the ideas that he was seeking to express. He was never verbose or prolix, and, if occasion demanded it, his speech could be both short and sharp.

His manner was usually grave, always unassuming, and courteous. And, while never gushing or effusive, he could be very cordial and gracious. Even when the occasion that called forth his speech was charged with tenseness, such was his self-control that he could speak with a perfectly level voice, and found no need either of loudness or harshness to secure the impression that he desired to make.

His activities were not determined by impulse, but by his enlightened judgment. He was in the habit of thinking before he acted. In the habit of getting the situation clearly before his mind, and deliberately shaping his conduct toward some well-defined goal that he had set before him.[33]

Self Control and Self Confidence. In discussing his personal characteristics, two of the qualities which Dr. McPheeters pointed out in him were self control and self confidence. Several of the calls which he refused were to larger fields than the ones he occupied, and in each change of pastorate which he made, he accepted a church with a smaller membership than the one he left. In so doing, Dr.

---

[33]W. M. McPheeters, "Dr. Gillespie, the Student and Man", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:13, November, 1930.

McPheeters says he showed good self control, by being unwilling to let ambition for advancement outrun his judgment as to the kind of field he was best qualified to serve.

On the other hand, Dr. McPheeters also observed in him the quality of self confidence:

> He had what I may call an earned self-confidence . . . He was in the habit of watching and criticizing both the methods of his work and its results. In consequence of this habit, he came to be aware that he could trust himself to do, and to do well, certain things. It gave him the measure of his abilities and confidence in them.[34]

This trait is seen in the way in which Gillespie entered upon his work as President of Columbia Seminary. The decision had already been made to move the Seminary to Atlanta, and writing to one of the Professors, he said:

> I feel that we have a big job ahead of us, but I am not afraid of it. If all the interested forces will get back of it and work with united purpose and whole-hearted devotion, we can accomplish our task.[35]

Vision. Vision is another quality which Dr. McPheeters mentions, and along with it the willingness to perform the "many humbler and unspectacular forms of service" which are necessary for the realization of a Vision.

---

[34] W. M. McPheeters, Op. Cit. p. 16.

[35] Letter of R.T.G. to R. C. Reed, December 9, 1924, In Seminary Files, T-30.

Among Gillespie's papers is a resolution of appreciation from the Joint Commission of Schools and Colleges (a commission appointed from both the Northern and Southern Synods of Kentucky for the prosecution of the million dollar educational campaign) in which this quality is especially mentioned.

> Dr. R. T. Gillespie was the one who first saw the need of our Presbyterian schools in relation to the obligation of the churches. We had all seen the needs of these institutions but had not seen them in the light of the loyalty of 36,000 Presbyterians . . . Dr. Gillespie saw the latent forces of thousands of loyal Christians and insisted that these believers in Jesus Christ could and would see as clearly as he did.[36]

The writer himself recalls walking with his father on more than one occasion, over the new Seminary campus in Decatur, and hearing him tell of his dreams for the future. In the light of the deflation years which have followed, those dreams may now seem extravagant, but the fact remains that Gillespie did have great visions for the future of the South, and for Columbia Seminary in her new location.

Executive ability. While he was a man who saw visions in whatever work he was engaged, yet he did not allow himself to become visionary. He also possessed the practical qualities by which he could work at the reali-

---

[36]Resolution of Joint Commission of Kentucky Presbyterian Educational Movement, In Seminary Files, B-10.

zation of his dreams. The same commission in Kentucky which commended him for seeing the needs and possibilities of the educational work in Kentucky, also added in another paragraph:

> To vision Dr. Gillespie added rare executive leadership. It required the acme of judgment to overcome every obstacle in an enterprise sadly beset with countless difficulties. But so wisely did he lead that, as we look back upon the enterprise, it is hard to think that there were any pitfalls at all.[37]

Indeed, it was the practical side of his life which seemed to impress the laymen with whom he worked in the pastorate. One of them, a banker, wrote of him, "he was eminently qualified for business or professional life";[38] and another in another church wrote:

> His strongest work was that of organization, and in this field his ability was certainly providentially sent, as our congregation had been much disturbed by moving into a new section, and only the most careful leadership could have kept the work in good condition. This Dr. Gillespie provided.[39]

Unsparing energy. Another characteristic, according to Dr. McPheeters, was the unsparing energy with which Gillespie gave himself to his work.

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] Melton Clark, "Dr. Gillespie, Pastor and Preacher", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:9, November, 1930, Quoting letter from C. N. Marshall, Lexington, Kentucky.

[39] Ibid. p. 10. Quoting letter from T. F. Gordon, Louisville, Kentucky.

> . . . having entered upon a task, he was prepared to stake everything that he had in the way of mental, moral, and physical resources and energy to bring it to a successful conclusion. I do not mean that he was foolishly wasteful of his energies. He sought to conserve them merely that he might use them more effectively and for a longer period. He did not think that a man's main end in life was just to keep living.[40]

In this connection, the writer recalls that his father often warned him against too close application to work without sufficient time for relaxation and exercise. One of the failures in his life, he would say, was that he had never learned to play, and after coming to the Seminary as President, he was always solicitous for the students' welfare. Writing to one of the students, he said,

> Nothing is more important in a minister's life than a well developed physique, combined with good health and with proper habits of living, and I am determined to see that in the future our men are not neglected in this respect.[41]

It is likely in his own case that it was his intense application to his work that caused the inroads on his health which resulted in his early death.

Patience and tenacity of purpose. Another characteristic of his life was his patience and tenacity of purpose. Obstacles and disappointments did not deter him.

---

[40] W. M. McPheeters, Op. Cit. p. 16.

[41] Letter of R.T.G. to Melrose Avery, October 15, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-2.

When a campaign to set Columbia free of her debt in 1930 failed of its purpose, he wrote as follows to the President of the Board:

> The conditions were not ideal for the presentation of a cause such as ours . . . I am always hopeful that some way out of our difficulties will be discovered . . . I do not feel the pessimism which I detect in letters coming to me and in your letters. I know we have had a difficult year, and in many respects, the financial side of our problem has been disappointing, but . . . I have confidence that we shall be able to work out our problems in some way.[42]

Faith and prayer. Close akin to this quality of perseverance, and the real source of it, was his earnest prayer life. Among his papers, there is a set of minutes of a Workers' Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, in which the church leaders were preparing to launch the financial campaign for the Presbyterian schools and colleges of that state. In the minutes is found this statement:

> At the outing in Shawnee park, after a splendid social time, Dr. Gillespie spoke on the strength of the movement and the Worker. He said that our might should be God's Glorious power, using which we could not fail. He spoke of his own experience in securing finances for schools, of the occasion when he made a trip into Florida representing the Columbia Seminary. On this trip he did not have the backing of a great organization, nor the encouragement of comrades, but went alone and was thrown back on prayer as the only solution for his difficulties. His earnestness and his recital of the things that had been accomplished deeply impressed every-

---

[42]Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, April 29, 1930, In Seminary Files, G-18.

one who heard him.[43]

Loyalty and devotion to his calling. A final characteristic was his loyalty and devotion to his calling. The banker who spoke about his professional and business ability also said of him, "To me, his most outstanding characteristic was his devotion to the high calling of his Master. Nothing was allowed to turn him aside from this one great purpose of his life.[44]

Dr. McPheeters, in closing his memorial address, said:

> His service was a service which could not be paid for in money. It was the devotion of a heart to a great and worthy cause. When, toward the close of his career, he mistakenly thought that the Board, in providing a period of rest for him, were simply seeking in a kind and courteous way to relieve him of the onerous duties of the presidency, because they felt that his physical frame had given way under the weight and pressure of them, he was like a man who has been stricken by a deadly dart. He said to me in private conversation that, if he were no longer physically fit for the duties of the presidency, he wanted the Board to retain him in some relation in connection with the institution - that his life was centered in it and that he was prepared, if need be, to die in its service.[45]

---

[43] Minutes of Workers' Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, August 3-4, 1922. In Seminary Files, E-44.

[44] Melton Clark, Op. Cit. p. 9. Quoting letter from C. M. Marshall, Lexington, Kentucky.

[45] W. M. McPheeters, On. Cit. p. 23.

These are some of the personal characteristics of Richard T. Gillespie, as they are disclosed in the available records. It is important that they be noted because they are the sine qua non of his life and work.

III: FAMILY LIFE

Gillespie was a man who always loved his home, and spent most of his spare hours with his family. He felt keenly his responsibility in the training of the children, and on one occasion, when he was called to a work which would have kept him away from home much of the time, he wrote,

> I believe the work in my church here is in such shape that I could leave it without injury to the work . . . but we have a family of three small children, two of whom are boys now starting in their school work. While their mother is thoroughly capable and competent to take care of all the personal wants of her children, having herself entire charge of them, so that I have never found it necessary to assume any part in their personal care which would in any way interfere with my work, yet I feel that these boys are rapidly coming into the age where the father should be their constant companion, and should have a large part in the shaping of their ideals and the moulding of their character. If I were at this time to transplant my family to West Virginia among perfect strangers, in an environment with which they are entirely unfamiliar, and then leave them to themselves, I fear I would not be doing my duty as a husband and father. If I were the only man who could do this work, I would feel differently about it, but I know there are men whose circumstances are different, who could enter upon the work under much more favorable conditions.[46]

---

[46]Letter of R.T.G. to D. P. McGeachy, October 5, 1916, In Personal Files, M-14.

In the years to follow, the family ties became ever stronger, so that eight years later, upon accepting the Presidency of Columbia Seminary, Gillespie could write to the President of the Board,

> My family are very reluctant to leave Louisville, and so am I. We have never been so happy and in this field every prospect pleases. But all have consented, and all have pledged themselves to do their best to help Dad accomplish this task.[47]

Home interests. In the early years of his ministry, Gillespie was able to give more time to home duties and to work around the house than in later years. Being of a practical turn, he was apt with tools and always had a set of good tools which he kept in good condition. The writer recalls that his father would not buy cheap tools, but always insisted that a good tool was worth the extra price. Later on, he equipped his boys with a tool chest of their own, and encouraged them in their use. He would often remind them of the care that must be taken of tools, and would check up on them from time to time. The writer recalls particularly that his father would not endure broken fixtures and needed repairs around the house, but always saw that they were promptly taken care of. Sometimes he would do the work himself,

---

[47]Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, December 9, 1924, In Personal Files, M-14.

and would take the boys into the task with him, making them feel that their part of the work was essential to its completion.

In this connection, the writer recalls one Christmas during the War, when his father made a set of doll furniture for the little sister. The high cost of goods during this period made the purchase of the furniture prohibitive, so he called the boys together and they decided that they would make the furniture out of the materials which were at hand. The work was done secretly, in the attic, that it might be a complete surprise. Some wooden curtain rods supplied the material for the cradle, and the rockers were made out of a wooden coathanger, cut in half. A problem was presented in getting a rod the right size for the poster bed. One of the rods in the chicken house roost was just the right size. With the help of the boys, the rod was taken out and, when cleaned and planed down, made a splendid bed. The fancy legs for the table were made from some old bannisters found in the attic. So, in one way and another, the furniture was made and proved a great surprise to the little girl on Christmas day. At the time, the writer thought nothing of all the pains his father had taken in bringing him and his brother into the enterprise, but in the light of the years, he can now see that his father was probably as much interested in what the boys were learning, as in making the fur-

niture itself.

Another interest of Gillespie's during the earlier years of his family life was the family garden. Again he took his boys into the plan and each had his own plot to work. In later years, this interest in nature continued, and he encouraged the boys in scouting and camping, though he was not able to enter extensively into it with them. While at the Seminary, his chief diversion was the beautification of the campus. He loved every phase of nature, and spent most of his spare hours with it. After his death, his secretary wrote,

> It is very trying to be here with all the memories of everything around here. Even the bird calls remind me of Dr. Gillespie's enjoyment of the birds and his frequent comment on how many lovely birds there were around and how much company they were to him.[48]

Another project into which Gillespie entered with his boys was the raising of poultry and rabbits. Poultry had already been a hobby with him in his days in Florence, and writing in later years to a member of the Lexington church, a poultry man at the State University, he said,

> Your work is a hobby of mine and I have always been keenly interested in the development of poultry, though I regret having little opportunity to show a practical interest since coming to Louisville. You are rendering a genuine service to the welfare of the whole community

---

[48]Letter of Virginia Harrison to C. H. Baldwin, June 11, 1930, In Seminary Files, G-3.

in teaching the people how to produce better poultry.[49]

In Lexington, he became interested in raising rabbits as well as chickens. The first pair of rabbits was bought on Thanksgiving Day, 1919. An adequate hutch was prepared for them, and the writer recalls the interest with which both father and sons entered into the raising of rabbits. They learned many lessons together in the next two years. The first surprise came when the boys found that some little rabbits had been born. Their natural question was, where had they come from, and the writer still remembers the sense of wonder that came over him when, simply and naturally, the father, standing before the open hutch, told the boys the story of reproduction in life. This was his method of teaching his sons their first lessons in biology.

Another lesson learned from the rabbits during these years was the difference in their breeding. Gillespie spent some much needed money for some highly bred rabbits, in order to bring out this truth. The writer recalls how a pair of scrub rabbits and a pair of pedigreed rabbits would be bred at the same time, and how he and his brother would be told to watch the difference in the offspring. The scrub

---

[49]Letter of R.T.G. to Holmes Martin, December 18, 1924, In Personal Files, T-31.

rabbits would be raised for the table and the pedigreed rabbits for shows. The father and sons together would work out the pedigrees of their best rabbits, and prepare them for the fair.

When it came to finding names for the rabbits, Bible names were often chosen. The writer recalls one Flemish giant doe which they named Rebecca, because she had been brought from afar, and a large buck of the same breed which they named Og, after the King in the Old Testament, who, because of his great size, is said to have slept in an iron bedstead.[50]

Another lesson which the boys learned was the necessity of feeding and caring for them regularly. At one time, they had as many as sixty-four rabbits, and the writer recalls that on more than one occasion, he and his brother were roused out of bed when they had forgotten their night feeding. They may have thought their father unreasonable at the time, but now it is apparent that he had found an effective way for teaching responsibility and adherence to duty.

Most of Gillespie's time with his children was spent in such ventures as these. He did not have much time for games with them, though he supplied them with the play

---

[50]Deuteronomy 3:11.

equipment which boys usually have.

Religion in the home. Religion, of course, had an important place in the home. Family prayers were regular every morning at breakfast, with the father reading a scripture portion and the whole family kneeling for prayer. Most of the religious instruction was at the hands of the mother, and Sunday afternoons were spent with her in reading the Bible and the church papers, and in studying the catechism. For a long time, the Sunday paper was not allowed in the home, and week day games and activities were taboo on Sunday. As a part of their religious life might be included the children's training in the use of money. While usually under a financial strain, yet the father managed to give each child a small weekly allowance, and helped them with the budgeting of it. Each child had his own account book which the father bought and opened for him. It was always their practice to take out a tenth for the church, and to contribute weekly through their church envelopes.

Another phase of the home life which is relevant here was the attitude in the home toward the negro servants. One servant remained with the family thirteen years, going to Kentucky with them after their removal from South Carolina. Another servant remained with the family during the whole of their stay in Louisville. With Gillespie's advice, she al-

lowed him to put aside a part of her wages each week, and when the family moved away, he was able to give her a good sized check for her savings.

The various holidays were happy seasons in the home. Especially was this true of the religious seasons, and their spiritual significance was never neglected. The father's part in the Christmas celebration still stands out in the writer's memory, for on this occasion he would give himself, without reserve, to his family. He took the lead in preparing for Christmas and sought to capture its highest values.

Discipline. In all of his dealings with his children, Gillespie was fair and considerate, but he did not hesitate to be stern when he thought the occasion demanded. At times, he would resort to corporal punishment. There were other methods, too, which were equally painful and effective. The writer recalls that on one occasion, he and his brother, returning home, were laughing about an escapade in which they had broken a hydrogen sulfide capsule on the floor of a barber shop, and had escaped before it took effect. The father overheard them, and without a word of reproach, took them to the barber shop. He sat out in the car while they went in alone to introduce themselves, and to apologize to the manager for what they had done.

Vacations. The family vacations were carefully planned, and for five full summers, the mother and children were sent to a religious resort in the mountains of Western North Carolina. During the summers, Gillespie would not let the boys take regular jobs, as some of their friends were doing. He felt that they should be free during vacation, that they might do better work later on.

During one of these summers in the mountains, the writer received, on his twelfth birthday, the following letter from his father,

June 24, 1921.

Dear Son:

Let me congratulate you on another birthday, and especially that you are twelve years old. I do not know whether I felt more pride and joy twelve years ago or now. But you have been a great joy to me through all these twelve years and I am very proud of my big boy (of Bob and Mary, too.)

I rejoice more than for any other cause that you are an earnest Christian boy, who loves right and honor above other things.

I do not care especially for you to be rich, but I am anxious that you be well prepared and trained for a life of usefulness. You must realize that this will never come to you without hard work and close application on your part. Then, too, I want you to have a good time and get all the joy possible out of life. Enter heartily into every manly sport and all wholesome exercise, that you may have a strong body to back up a good mind.

I am so glad you are having a good time at Montreat, and hope you may continue to enjoy everything up there.

Give mother a kiss and hug Bob and Mary and remember that I love you with all my heart.

Your Loving,

Daddy[51]

While the writer was not conscious of it at the time, looking back, he can see that these summers were planned for a definite purpose, because four years after the above, he wrote this letter to his father from Montreat.

June 29, 1925.

Dear Dad:

I should have written you before this to express my appreciation to you for this grand summer you have planned for us, but I have joined the Y. P. Conference and they have nothing but meetings morning, noon, and night, and I have been trying to attend them regularly . . .

Well, dad, if this conference hasn't done anything else for me, it has helped me to decide my life's work. I have heard the call of service in these last few days and I hope I will be able to answer it next Thurs. when they call for life work recruits. I am not exactly certain yet as to what special kind of service I should enter, and probably won't be able to decide that for some time. But you don't know how happy I am now that I have definitely decided to live for others, rather than self, and I am looking to you to help me to plan my life from now on . . .

Hoping you will let me know what you think of what I have told you, I remain

---

[51] Letter of R.T.G. to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., June 24, 1921, In Personal Files, L-1.

Your devoted son,

R.T.G.[52]

Since entering the ministry, the writer has been told that he was dedicated, before birth, to the Christian ministry. His father and mother never mentioned this to him before his decision as to life work, but apparently they planned his life in such a way that the boy would hear the call to service, and having heard it, would be more likely to accept. They seem to have been acting on Bushnell's thesis "that a child should be so trained that he has never known himself to be aught but a child of God." At least, this has been the experience of the writer, for he can recall no definite conversion experience, though there have been several "religious awakenings" such as this which he had at the age of sixteen.

Later years. There is a fairly full correspondence between the writer and his father, during the writer's days in college. These letters throw light on the father's methods of dealing with his son during those years. There seems, from the correspondance, to have been a perfect freedom between father and son, as the son wrote long let-

---

[52]Letter of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr. to R.T.G., June 29, 1925, In Personal Files, L-2.

ters to him, taking him into his confidence and seeking his advice on all kinds of problems. Some of the subjects covered are: the matter of finances; the kind of clothes the son ought to buy; the best kind of speech to make in a declamation contest; the various fraternity matters in which the son took an active part; a discussion of the curriculum and faculty of the college; the matter of summer work, and the like. The father went into all these problems with his son, taking a vital interest in every phase of his college life, and giving him such encouragement and advice as follows:

> We are all proud of your good report. It shows that you have done good work, and I trust you will continue well and strong so that you may not fall below the standard which you have already set for yourself. Be sure and take exercise and avoid any indulgence which might impair your health or cause deterioration in any of your organs.[53]

A particular problem to the son during this period was that of his social life, both from a financial and religious point of view. At the Spring Hellenic during his freshman year, the son wrote asking whether he should come home or remain for the spring dances. The father's reply is characteristic of the attitude he took with his son:

---

[53]Letter of R.T.G. to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., February 13, 1928, In Personal Files, L-14.

Mother and I have talked over fully what is best for your Easter holidays, and have decided that, if you would like to stay for the festivities on the campus, we will be glad to have you do so, and I will give you the $16.00 necessary to cover the expense, but I hope you can keep the expense within this amount. My reason for doing this is that I think campus activities of this nature should be counted a part of your educational program and, if entered into wholeheartedly, will prove of great social advantage. The only questionable feature is the dance which will possibly be a part of the program. I shall not lay down a hard and fast rule about this at the college, but our church is on record as being opposed to dancing, although they have made no arbitrary rule concerning it. The deliverance of the church is very clear and outspoken. P.C. is a church college, and I do not think they should have dances for this reason, but you are a Freshman and cannot decide this for other members of the student body. While you are not a candidate for the ministry under the care of Presbytery, you have announced your purpose to become a candidate for the ministry. It is not accepted as correct practice in the church for candidates for the ministry to participate in dancing, and as a matter of loyalty to the ideals of the church I think it would be a wise thing for you to refrain. This might prove embarrassing during the festivities of the holiday, but if we are to be true ministers of Christ, it will be necessary at some point to begin practicing self-denial, and we must learn to make sacrifices for his sake and for the sake of the Kingdom. If you stay for the festivities, I would expect you to enter whole-heartedly and without embarrassment into the spirit of the occasion. You could attend all functions, and it seems to me you could very well refrain from dancing, if you wish to do so, by announcing to your friends that it is your fixed policy to do this. However, I leave the whole matter to your discretion and judgment, and I shall not be critical, whatever you do.[54]

It is scarcely necessary to say that, in the light

---

[54]Letter of R.T.G. to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 5, 1927, In Personal Files, 1-5.

of the above, the son did not go to the dance that year. The next year, however, when the son decided that he would attend the dances, the father did not object, but maintained his policy of leaving the son to his own initiative in such matters. As far as the son remembers, he was not even critical, but supplied him with the funds.

His real method of dealing with his son is revealed in a letter to the pastor of the boy's home church, who had proposed that he be taken under care of Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry:

> . . . Richard does not seem to me to be sufficiently conscious of what it is to be a candidate for the ministry, and under care of Presbytery. I believe him to be a thoroughly good boy, earnest and conscientious, but in his social life there are some things for which he seems to have an affection, which I believe should be eliminated from his schedule and from his heart before he definitely and permanently identifies himself as a candidate for the ministry. I have not told him this, as I do not think it best to do so. I am depending on a gradual development, which I believe will come with a little time.[55]

This seems to be characteristic of his method of dealing with his children. As the writer looks back, he recalls his father as always being ready with advice when it was sought, but not of forcing it on him. The way the father worked "behind the lines" with his son is seen in another communication which was addressed to his son's Bible pro-

---

[55]Letter of R.T.G. to D. P. McGeachy, September 29, 1927, In Personal Files, D-12.

fessor at college:

> From the reports which we receive, Richard seems to be a careful student. In talking with me since his return, he gives me the impression that he is not fond of what he calls research work, or detailed investigation of subjects, that he prefers a broader and more general view of the question which must be considered. I have been hopeful that Richard might develop into a careful, painstaking student. I am willing to do everything possible to give him the best advantages, if he is willing to fit himself for something special . . . Do not tell him that I have written you, but talk with him if you have opportunity and try to do two things for me. Try to help him decide what he wants to do, and what he might do if he would begin while he is young to fit himself for some special task, and then encourage him to feel that unless he does make thorough preparation and continue to study, there will not be steady progress. I think you, perhaps, could do more in this than any other person whom I know, and I would greatly appreciate any help which you may be able to give him.[56]

As the children grew older, his method of training and discipline became more and more the guidance type, leaving to the individual a large share of responsibility for his decisions and actions.

The last experience which the writer had with his father was in January, 1930. He had finished college in the mid-term and was on his way to Florida to teach school for the remainder of the year. He recalls how his father drove to the station with him, and after an affectionate embrace, bade him farewell with these words, "Well, go ahead son, and do your best."

---

[56]Letter of R.T.G. to D. J. Brimm, December 26, 1928, In Personal Files, H-2.

When Gillespie lay on his death bed six months later , in a hospital in Charlottesville, Virginia, among his last words to his wife were these: "I am very tired. Go back and tell the boys and Mary they must carry on with you."

CHAPTER IV

HIS WORK AS PASTOR IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

I. THE CHURCHES SERVED

Florence, South Carolina. The Presbyterian Church of Florence was established as a mission in 1858. It was greatly hampered in its early development, and made little progress for many years, because of the unsettled conditions following the War Between the States. At the beginning of the century, however, the church began a period of expansion, during which time a new church was built and the membership greatly strengthened. When Gillespie came in 1908, the church had a membership of two hundred and thirty-nine, and a total budget of $2778.[1]

The town of Florence was a flourishing railroad center, and the nucleus of the church was a group of Scotch Irish Presbyterians whose families had settled in this section. Having been without a pastor for eighteen months, the church gladly welcomed Gillespie to his new work. One of the elders of the church, in extending the call, wrote him as follows:

It is needless to say that our congregation will be

---

[1] F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, editors, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850. p. 879.

> delighted to have you accept this call and to become the undershepherd of our flock . . . We have been a long time without this relation and our church has suffered thereby.[2]

His work in Florence consisted in further building up the membership of the church, strengthening the organization, increasing the budget, and deepening the spiritual life of the people. The physical improvements which were made while he was there included purchasing a manse and improving the Sunday School equipment. Also, he started the fund for a pipe organ, but the organ was not actually installed until shortly after his leaving. During the eight years of his pastorate, the membership increased to five hundred and the annual contributions to approximately $6000.[3] After he had been away several months, the same elder who had welcomed him wrote,

> Oh, how we do miss you! Each day we are brought to a realization of your absence from Florence with painful regrets that your removal deprives us of your splendid ministry, including that constructive work in all the departments of the Church.[4]

Maxwell Street Church, Lexington, Kentucky. When Gillespie accepted the call to the Maxwell Street Church,

---

[2]Letter of J. P. McNeill to R.T.G., February 17, 1908, In Personal Files, M-1a.

[3]Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S., 1917.

[4]Letter of J. P. McNeill to R.T.G., April 25, 1917, In Personal Files, R-1.

the congregation had recently completed a new plant which was located near the campus of the State University. While there is no correspondence to the effect, it is probably true that the opportunity which this offered, of a ministry to the University group, made an appeal to him. He did hope that he might have more time for study in his new work, and in applying for a correspondence course from a Bible School, he wrote:

> I finished at Columbia Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina, nine years ago, and since then until a month ago was pastor at Florence, South Carolina. I have just come to take charge of the new Maxwell Street Church here. My main reason for coming was to get away from everything at home which claimed so large a part of my time, and to work for a time in a field which, in my opinion, offers a good opportunity for study.[5]

In the early years of his Lexington ministry, the following narrative is found in the Minutes of the Session Book, concerning the condition of the church:

1. Attendance upon church services as a whole is fairly good, though some of the people never come and much is left to be desired at night services.
2. It is known that several families observe family worship regularly, but the proportion is not known.
3. More than a dozen families bought the "Family Altar", and undertook to have family worship.
4. This is a Sabbath observing church, judged by the standards of the community.
5. The Bible and Catechisms are taught to some extent in the homes.

---

[5]Letter of R.T.G. to W. H. Marquess, March 22, 1917, In Personal Files, S-1.

6. The Bible is well taught in the S.S. and the catechism to some extent.
7. The people are fairly liberal with their means.
8. The pastor is paid $2400 and manse fully and promptly.
9. The Spirit has been with us and his power manifest.
10. While worldly conformity exists, it is not conspicuous.
11. A colored mission Sabbath school is maintained.
12. The claims of the Gospel ministry are presented.[6]

The outbreak of the World War, soon after his coming to Lexington, made progress more difficult, but in spite of this, the work went forward and the membership was increased from three hundred and eighty-five to five hundred and one, during his ministry there. The material improvements made to the new church were the completion of Sunday School rooms in the basement, and the addition of a pipe organ.

First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky. The First Presbyterian Church of Louisville was established in 1816, and was the mother church of Presbyterianism in that city. For many years, it had served in a downtown location, but several other Presbyterian churches had grown up nearby and it finally became evident that it was to the best interests of the cause for one of them to move. In 1910, the congregations of the First Church and the Westminster Church, a small residential church in the southern part of the city,

---

[6] Sessional Records of the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, April 8, 1917, pp. 18-19.

decided to unite, with the eventual purpose of building an adequate plant in the Westminster location. At the time of the union and for some years afterward, services were divided between First and Westminster, but the outbreak of the war and other matters made consummation of the plan impossible at the time. Finally, in 1918, the Warren Memorial Church, a Northern Presbyterian Church nearby, proposed that the First Church dissolve its relations with Westminster and unite with them in one large downtown organization. The new organization was to join the Northern Assembly and to bear the name, The First Memorial Presbyterian Church. The congregation of the First Church divided over this proposal, with the result that eighty-two members withdrew to unite with the Warren Memorial. About this time, the congregation of the First Church succeeded in selling their downtown property to another religious group, and transferred all activities to the Westminster location.[7] When Gillespie accepted the call in October, 1921, the congregation had already begun work on a new $113,000 building, on the site where the old Westminster Church had stood. It was this opportunity of building up an old church in a new location that appealed to Gillespie and led him to accept the call.

---

[7] Sessional Records of the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1910-1920.

A portion of the Westminster building was included in the new Sunday School plant, and the whole structure was completed and dedicated the following October. The Sunday School plant had been completed the preceding February and all services had been held there.

Gillespie's private register shows that during the three years of his Louisville pastorate, he received two hundred and forty-eight members on profession of faith and by letter; but the Minutes of the General Assembly show no net increase for those years, the number remaining at about four hundred and fifty. This probably means that there were a good many transfers and adjustments to be made during this period of transition, and that Gillespie's work consisted mainly in strengthening the nucleus that he already had, and in building a new organization.

II. EDUCATIONAL WORK

The Sunday School. The years of Gillespie's pastorates were the years when rapid progress was being made in the development of the Sunday School movement in the South. At the time he began his Florence ministry, the Sunday School met in the afternoon and consisted mainly of a few classes for children. He soon had the hour changed from afternoon to the morning, and sought to give the Sunday School a larger

place in the work of the church.[8] According to the Sessional Records, a Home Department was organized for the shut-ins in 1912, and in 1914, a class for elderly men was formed.[9] In the same year, a class was organized for the younger men and was called the "Yoke Fellows Class." Gillespie himself became the teacher of this class and it was his most important work in the Sunday School, while in Florence. One of the men, speaking of this class, said:

> Largely through his influence, a young men's class was organized in the Sunday School, with an enrollment of one hundred, every one of whom was eager and alert to do any service which Dr. Gillespie suggested.[10]

The record book of the class, which is among Gillespie's papers, shows that on one occasion when the class sponsored a contest, the attendance went up to seventy-four, but the usual attendance varied between twenty and forty. After the first year of the organization, the minutes record that

> . . . the Leader (Gillespie) expressed a very great appreciation of the faithful attendance of the class, of the work that had been done, and urged every one to continue their attendance and put forth considerable

---

[8] Sessional Records of the First Presbyterian Church, Florence, South Carolina, September 26, 1912. p.246.

[9] Ibid, April 16, 1914, p. 262.

[10] Melton Clark, "Dr. Gillespie, the Pastor and Preacher", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:9, November, 1930. Quoting letter of F. L. Wilcox.

effort to encourage others to attend and become members.[11]

The successful work of this class became rather widely known, and the editor of the Assembly's Publication Committee wrote, asking for a story to be used in the church-at-large.[12] Also, there is a record that in 1915, he addressed the State Sunday School Convention on the subject, "The Adult Bible Class in the Work of the Church."[13]

In Louisville, he helped organize another young men's class, and had a special room equipped for them in the basement of the church. Upon his leaving Louisville, he received this letter from them, signed by twelve members of the class:

> Your visit last Thursday evening pleased us very much and after you had gone, some boy said, "Dr. Gillespie is a good fellow and we ought to let him know how we appreciate all he has done for us." To this every fellow responded with a hearty aye.
>
> As for the room, we are going to make it count for something. We are going to make it bright and cheerful, a suitable place for a good, wholesome fellowship. We are going to hang a few choice pictures, and if you will think proper and have one to spare, there is no picture we would value more than your own, for your name will be forever linked with the room. In that room, we are going to try hard to get closer to Jesus, and with the help of the room, we hope to attract other boys to our fellow-

---

[11] Minutes for Sunday, September 20, 1914. In Record Book of Yoke Fellows Class, In Personal Files.

[12] Letter of R. A. Lapsley to R.T.G., April 14, 1914, In Personal Files, R-2.

[13] Letter of (Mrs.) S. N. Burts to R.T.G., March 31, 1915. In Personal Files, R-3.

ship, that they may come to know Jesus as we know him.

Your presence has been a great blessing to our church, especially the young people, and we are going to miss you very, very much . . .[14]

Gillespie also took an early interest in teacher training, and there are several letters in his Florence correspondence from the Superintendent of the Assembly's Committee on Publication. Apparently, at this time, Leadership Training was in its early stage of development in the church, and the best the Superintendent could do was to make some general suggestions as to the best material to use. He says,

The whole matter of Teacher Training is undergoing some considerable changes at present. It will be some weeks, maybe months, before we can get ready for the changes, but meantime, time need not be lost, but can well be used in taking the courses we have already prepared.[15]

About this time, he also wrote the Publication Committee concerning the establishment of a Sunday School Library. They wrote that they would be glad to make him a special price on such a project, but there is no record as to whether this was carried through.[16]

---

[14]Letter signed by twelve members of class to R.T.G., January 25, 1925. In Personal Files, R-4.

[15]Letter of A. L. Phillips to R.T.G., February 15, 1915, In Personal Files, R-5.

[16]Letter of G. L. Cook, Jr. to R.T.G., August 29, 1914, In Personal Files, R-6.

There are no records among his papers in the Sunday School at Lexington, but during his pastorate there, the basement of the church was completed for Sunday School purposes. The church was built on the "Akron Plan" of church architecture, with some of the classrooms opening off on the church auditorium. The writer recalls that after the classes, the entire school would assemble for the closing exercises, led by the Superintendent.

Soon after Gillespie went to Louisville, the Sunday School plant of the new church was completed, and one of his first tasks was the reorganization of the Sunday School. There is a letter in the files from the General Superintendent of the Assembly's Committee, to whom Gillespie had written for help, expressing his gratification at the new set-up, and enclosing a list of books to use in planning his organization.[17] The following account appeared in the press, concerning the plans which were made:

> Plans for an organized Sunday School, modeled on the basis of the efficiency programme outlined by the National Sunday School Association are under way and a tentative programme has been completed.
>
> Six departments have been mapped out, with separate class rooms, officers and teachers. A teachers' training course, offering a three years' course and leading to a diploma in religious instruction has also been

---

[17]Letter of Gilbert Glass to R.T.G., December 14, 1921, In Personal Files, R-7.

arranged.

A nursery for the benefit of mothers who wish to leave their children too small to attend church services will be maintained in connection with the primary department and supervised by the instructors.

The departments already outlined, and for whom a tentative teaching staff has been provided, are the cradle roll and beginners' department, including children from one to five years old; the primary department, children of six, seven, eight years; junior department, children of eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve years; the intermediate department, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen years; senior department, boys and girls of sixteen and seventeen; the young people's department, from eighteen to twenty-three years, and the adult department, embracing men and women of over twenty-four years.

Other classes will be added from time to time as demands on the present programme make it necessary.

Pupils will be promoted annually from one class to another as their age and grading permits . . .

In addition there will be a home department conducted for invalids and others who are not able to attend regular classes.[18]

Other educational agencies. During Gillespie's pastorate in Florence, the Christian Endeavor Movement was just becoming established in the South, and Gillespie seems to have taken an active interest in it. The President of the State Christian Endeavor Union wrote him in 1915, assigning him a place on the program for the State Convention, and saying, "I am certainly delighted that you are getting ready

---

[18] Clipping from a Louisville (Kentucky) paper, December, 1921. In Personal Scrapbook #1.

to start the C. E. in your church, and I want to say you will never regret it.[19] Already, there had been an organization for the girls in the church, known as the Miriams, and one of them, writing him from college in 1915, said,

> I have been planning a good many things for the Miriams and I am wanting to start over again and do some real work this summer. If you think that I can do anything at all, I will be so glad to do it, for you understand the debt I owe to the church in giving me my first vision.[20]

The results of his work with the Christian Endeavor Society are reflected in the following resolutions which were adapted upon his leaving:

> Whereas: Our beloved pastor, Mr. R. T. Gillespie, organized the Intermediate Society of Christian Endeavor, has shown deep interest in the Society, and has given it his encouragement and support, and
>
> Whereas: Through his earnest efforts the society has meant much to the members . . .
>
> Be it Resolved:
>
> That we render him our heartfelt thanks for his interest in us as a society and as individuals. We promise him that we will carry forward to the best of our ability, the work which he has begun, and that we will strive to attain the goals which he has set . . .[21]

---

[19]Letter of Wyatt Taylor to R.T.G., September 27, 1915, In Personal Files, R-8.

[20]Letter of Blanche Jaeger to R.T.G., April 29, 1915, In Personal Files, R-9.

[21]Resolutions of Intermediate Society of Christian Endeavor concerning R.T.G., January 30, 1917. In Personal Files, R-10.

He continued his interest in young people and Societies of Christian Endeavor were established in the other churches he served. So strong was the group which was established in the First Church, Louisville, that some members of the Society remained active in Christian Endeavor as long as ten years after he had left the church.

There are no records concerning his work with the women of his churches, as this work was usually well organized and set up by the women themselves. It has been recalled, however, that during his Florence pastorate, he used his influence to have the women adopt the newly established Auxiliary plan of the Assembly, in place of the existing Ladies' Aid and Missionary Societies. There was some opposition to the change at first, but Gillespie always sought to keep his work in line with the Assembly's plans, and finally succeeded in doing so with the women of this church.[22] In the Men's Work, he was a member of the Committee which set up the Assembly's Plan for the Men-of-the-Church.[23] Before this plan was adopted, however, he had already organized a Men's Club in his Louisville Church, and there are clippings

---

[22]Interview of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., with Mrs. Elizabeth H. Gillespie, April 12, 1938.

[23]Letter of J. P. McCallie to R.T.G., June 20, 1923, In Personal Files, S-10.

in his scrapbook showing that at times they had charge of the evening service in the church.[24] The programs must have included subjects of general interest, as well as religious, according to the following report:

> The men's club of this church held their second supper meeting at the church Tuesday evening, September 18, with forty-five men present. A delightful supper was served by Circle Number One, after which Lieutenant Raymond R. Brown, of Bowman Field, gave an interesting address on "The Development of Aviation and Its Future Commercial Value." The Men's club is growing and planning for intensive work.[25]

The missionary program of the church was presented through sermons from the pulpit and through the various organized groups. He used the material sent out by the Assembly's Committees, and there are letters in the files inviting the Assembly's Secretaries to come out and present the causes in person.[26] There is also a letter from one of his young people, off at college, who writes Gillespie that she has decided to volunteer for the mission field, and asks him to help overcome her parents' objection.[27]

---

[24]Advertisement in Louisville Courier-Journal, December 1, 1923.

[25]Church News, Christian Observer, October 3, 1923.

[26]Letter of Homer McMillan to R.T.G., February 16, 1909, In Personal Files R-43; Letter of S. L. Morris to R.T.G., October 2, 1913, In Personal Files, R-44.

[27]Letter of Blanche Jaeger to R.T.G., March 1, 1914, In Personal Files, R-17.

One young couple did go out from the Louisville Church, and there is the record of a farewell service planned for them on the eve of their departure.[28]

From these records, it is evident that Gillespie assumed responsibility himself for the educational activities of his churches, and spared no effort to develop an adequate educational program.

III. PASTORAL, EVANGELISTIC, AND COMMUNITY WORK

Pastoral work. An officer in one of Gillespie's churches has written concerning him that "as a pastor, Dr. Gillespie showed himself well equipped by native disposition and ability to fill the position in a most useful way.[29] None of the congregations which he served was so large that he could not keep a personal oversight of his members. Notations in his notebooks seem to indicate that he was in more or less constant touch with them, and letters from former parishioners reflect a close personal relationship between pastor and people. Especially is this true in his relations with the men of his churches. After

---

[28] Bulletin, First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, June 29, 1924. In Personal Scrapbook #2.

[29] Melton Clark, Op. Cit. Quoting letter of F. L. Wilcox.

his death, one of his former officers wrote to his wife,

> I shall always remember the sweet short years all of you were with us when he was our beloved pastor, and I shall ever hold dear those sacred memories. I loved him like a brother, and when you lived here he once told me the same.[30]

Another wrote at the same time, "There are very few men whom I have been privileged to know during my life, that I felt closer to than him."[31]

He was especially solicitous and attentive to his people in time of sickness and sorrow, and one of his former members writes,

> When I lost my dear wife last fall and wrote him after her death, he wrote me one of the grandest and most comforting letters I have ever received in my life and it has helped me to carry my sorrow and I often take it out and re-read it for comfort.[32]

Gillespie's spirit at these times is shown in a letter written later to another friend, in the loss of a loved one:

> Eighteen years as a pastor has convinced me that if there is ever a time when one needs the ministry of a pastor it is in an hour such as this when some great shadow overwhelms us.
>
> I am always greatly comforted under such circum-

---

[30]Letter of Nelson Smith to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, undated but probably June, 1930, In Personal Files, R-11.

[31]Letter of C. M. Marshall to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, June 17, 1930, In Personal Files, R-12.

[32]Letter of Nelson Smith to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, Loc. Cit.

stances by the consciousness of the overshadowing love of the divine Spirit. Then more than at any other time I feel the assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose. I am sure that our Heavenly Father who does not overlook the fall of even a sparrow, will continue to be with you and that He will, through the Holy Spirit, minister, comfort, and provide strength to sustain you.[33]

In writing to a fellow minister concerning his methods in the hour of death, he says:

During my ministry, especially in the last two pastorates, it was my custom always to return to the home as quickly as possible after the visitors and friends had left, and there minister to the family such spiritual comfort as was possible. This included always, of course, the reading of the Scripture and prayer. I feel that our ministers would find a large field for the service of comforting ministry, if they would go back to the house of mourning, for it is after the services at the grave that the depression is heaviest.[34]

Letters in Gillespie's files show that he also kept in touch with his non-resident members. There are several letters from young people of his Florence church, off at college, who were writing him concerning their personal problems and experiences.[35] There are also letters from members who have moved away but who write back concerning

---

[33]Letter of R.T.G. to Mrs. T. S. Bryan, April 7, 1927, In Seminary Files, E-4.

[34]Letter of R.T.G. to J. C. Rowan, January 17, 1929, In Seminary Files, F-5.

[35]Cf. Personal Files, R-13, R-14, R-15, R-16, R-17, R-18.

their continued interest in the church. One such writes, "I still think of the little missionary society and hope and pray for its prosperity. We have one here which I have joined."[36] He apparently urged them to change their membership promptly when moving away, for there are letters asking for transfers, and others explaining why they did not desire to change at the time.[37] He would also urge the college students from his church to take up affiliate membership in the churches where they could attend. One of the college pastors wrote him, "If other pastors would take the interest you have manifested, it would be easy to get the girls to form the affiliate relation."[38]

Gillespie seems to have had numerous calls on him from all classes, by those who were down and out or in trouble, and his correspondence indicates that the assistance he gave them was of a very personal and sympathetic nature. One man of very limited education, and an addict of drink, to whom Gillespie had ministered, wrote him,

> I would like very mutch to be in florence sometime and see you, but don't know when that will be. I

---

[36] Letter of E. Irene French to R.T.G., February 26, ____, In Personal Files, R-19.

[37] Cf. Personal Files, R-20, R-21, R-22, R-23.

[38] Letter of J. J. Hill to R.T.G., November 15, 1915, In Personal Files, R-24.

> have not forgotten my promise and am praying all the time and I know that you don't forget to pray for me.[39]

There are also requests from parents that he look up their wayward boys,[40] and correspondence in which he seeks to find an institution for an unwed girl who is about to become a mother;[41] to place an old woman in a home for the aged;[42] and to place a family of needy children in an orphanage.[43] He was always solicitous that the church should fulfill her mission to this group of people, and writing later to one of his fellow ministers, he says that it is up to the church to prove that she

> . . . is capable of ministering to the sick and to those who are in want, especially to those who are outside its regular circles - the neglected, the down and out, the poor, the friendless. Those who have money, good homes, social standing, and place in the community are never overlooked. Their friends and their churches see to this, but those who most need the ministry of the church are often overlooked.[44]

His ministry also extended to those of other races

---

[39]Letter of _____ to R.T.G., March 30, 1914, In Personal Files, R-25.

[40]Cf. Personal Files, R-26, R-27, R-28, R-29, R-30.

[41]Cf. Personal Files, R-31.

[42]Cf. Personal Files, R-32.

[43]Cf. Personal Files, R-33.

[44]Letter of R.T.G. to J. C. Rowan, January 17, 1929, In Seminary Files, F-5.

for among his best friends and members in the Florence church were some Syrian families who had recently come to this country and had set up a successful business. All during the early years of the World War, he handled the details of helping them send money through the Mission Board to their stricken families in the East,[45] and after Gillespie had left Florence, one of them wrote him:

> I can tell you a great deal more of what happened in that unfortunate country during all of these four years of war, but I rather not even think of what they have suffered and I am very grateful that the Good Lord have saved from starvation and disease the living ones, and that the help that I was sending them from here alltogether with the assistance of Presbyterian foreign mission was the princebale mean of their salvation, for sister said, that if it was not for the money that I kept sending them and the contribution that they received from the mission, they would have also starved.[46]

There are other evidences in the files of the way in which Gillespie handled the personal details of his people's needs. Among them is a scribbled note, apparently from a negro man, saying, "Rev. Galespy please send me the money for sitting up with Mr. Cooper when he was sick or send me word who is going to settle with me. Robert Harlee.",

---

[45]Letter of R.T.G. to Russell Carter, March 20, 1915, In Personal Files, R-34.

[46]Letter of N. B. Baroody to R.T.G., January 4, 1919, In Personal Files, R-35.

and beneath it in Gillespie's hand, a notation, "Pd. 5/ 26/13."[47] Because of his interest in people and his personal attention to their needs, one of his former officers wrote concerning him, after his death, "He was not only loved and admired by the members of his own church, but his popularity extended throughout the entire community, among all classes of people."[48]

Evangelistic work. According to his Register, Gillespie received three hundred and ninety-six members on profession of faith, and six hundred and ninety-nine by transfer, (total one thousand and ninety-five), during this seventeen years in the pastorate. This is an average of more than sixty-four each year, or better than one each Sunday.

In setting up the evangelistic program of his church, he usually planned a week or more of special services each year, with a guest preacher. Two of these meetings were outstanding as far as the number of accessions is concerned. One meeting held in Florence in 1909 resulted in thirty-nine additions, and another held in Lexington in 1919 resulted in

---

[47]Cf. Personal Files, R-36.

[48]Melton Clark, Op. Cit. p. 9, Quoting letter of F. L. Wilcox.

forty-one.[49] The kind of plans which were made for some of these services is seen in the following account of the preparation for a meeting in the Louisville church:

> Eight weeks of study in personal work and evangelization by the pastor the Rev. R. T. Gillespie; a survey of the territory around the church at First Street and Ormsby Avenue, and organization of a special chorus choir by Thomas F. Gordon are the preparations being made by the First Presbyterian Church in Louisville for the services to be held from November 9 to 23.[50]

There is a notebook among Gillespie's papers, in which are found the notes for the course in personal work, referred to above.[51] The class was conducted at the mid-week prayer service, and apparently was based on the text book, Personal Work, by R. A. Torrey. There are six lectures in which the importance, methods of work, qualifications of the individual, and opportunities offered are discussed. The last class was a demonstration between Gillespie and one of his officers, who took the part of an unbeliever, and the kind of conversation that would likely take place in a discussion concerning the man's salvation. Relevant scripture quotations for such work were suggested and recommended to be memorized. The whole course was

---

[49] Cf. Pastor's Register, In Personal Files.

[50] Newspaper Clipping from Courier-Journal, Louisville, Kentucky. October 27, 1924. In Personal Scrapbook #2.

[51] In Personal Files.

taught from the orthodox and Biblical points of view, with the approach based on an individualistic appeal.

The beneficial effect of these special services on some of the church members is seen in the following note, sent to Gillespie following one of the meetings:

> Some of the messages have nearly broken my heart. They have made me so ashamed of the half hearted service I have given to my Saviour and I pray he will forgive me and help me to serve him truly and wholeheartedly. Friday afternoon, I realized more than ever before the responsibility resting on your shoulders, and how much you have to give of yourself for us - how, to help us, you must share our troubles and sorrows as well as our joys and pleasures. And please Dr. Gillespie . . . if I am not doing all I can to help, tell me so . . . for I want the work to be well done . . . for it is our Father's business . . . I am ready to serve as best I may.[52]

The fact that most of Gillespie's accessions were received along at regular intervals, rather than during revival meetings, seems to indicate that he relied chiefly on personal work and pastoral visitation for evangelistic results. Concerning this phase of his work, one of his officers has written:

> From the very beginning of his services in Florence there was a gratifying increase in the membership of the church, and hardly a Sunday passed during his entire stay that from one to thirty-nine members were not received into the church on profession of their faith. The result is disclosed in the fact that when he resigned from the pastorate of this church, December 1,

---

[52]Letter of _____ to R.T.G., undated, In Personal Files, R-37.

1916, the total membership was more than four hundred and eighty-five.[53]

Community work. Gillespie's main contribution to the life of the community was through the organized work of the church. His duties in the church made it impossible for him to assume many active duties in organized community work.

During his first pastorate, however, he was for a while President of the Associated Charities, and there is some correspondence in the files concerning his work for that organization. In answer to some questions regarding the Association, he made the following statement of policy:

> It is the policy to relieve all distress and suffering in the city of Florence when such cases are referred to the Association, or are discovered by any of our officers or members. The primary object of the Association is to relieve temporary distress and to care for emergency cases. This does not mean that we will not care for permanent cases, but the plan is to make some permanent arrangement for the care of such parties by those whose proper function it is to care for such cases.[54]

At a later date, he was appointed Chairman of the Local Committee of Visitors in Florence County for the State

---

[53] Melton Clark, On. Cit. p. 9, Quoting letter of F. L. Wilcox.

[54] Letter of R.T.G. to Mrs. George Brandt, April 6, 1915, In Personal Files, R-38.

Board of Charities and Corrections,[55] but he was forced to resign because of his duties in the church. In offering his resignation, he said:

> When I accepted the chairmanship of the County Committee, it was with the confident hope that I might be of real service to the dependent and delinquent element in our community. I find, however, that it will be impossible for me to do well the work of the office, which I conceive to be a very important one. Since the day I accepted the appointment, there has not been a single opportunity to visit even one of the institutions, though I have tried every day to find time for this work. I, therefore, deem it necessary to offer my resignation, and ask that you make another appointment at the very earliest date possible.[56]

There is some evidence in the Florence files of Gillespie's part in bringing attractions of cultural and educational interest to the community. This was the day of lyceums and Chatauquas, and he, along with the other pastors, was apparently on the Committee-in-charge. There is one letter where Gillespie assumes personal responsibility for disposing of fifty tickets.[57]

There are no records of any special community activity during the War years, with the exception of a few

---

[55] Letter of Albert D. Oliphant to R.T.G., September 1, 1915, In Personal Files, R-39.

[56] Letter of R.T.G. to J. D. Oliphant, October 26, 1915, In Personal Files, R-40.

[57] Letter of H. L. Bridges to R.T.G., February 18, 1914, In Personal Files, R-41.

circulars dealing with the need of Near East Relief.[58] This appeal was probably taken to his congregation, as it was his usual custom to cooperate in such appeals. He was outside the age limit of the war service draft, and his family responsibilities kept him from volunteering.

During his later years in the pastorate and at the Seminary, his whole time was given to the local church and to the work of the church-at-large.

IV. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

The program of work which Gillespie projected in each of his churches called for a generous financial response from the congregations. His early experience in business, however, was a good training for his financial and administrative duties.

In 1914, five years after he had begun his ministry in Florence, the General Assembly proposed "the Assembly's Plan of Finance" to be used in the local churches. It was a plan which included: separate budgets for Benevolences and Current Expense; an Every Member Canvass; and the use of the Duplex Envelope System. Gillespie succeeded in having the new plan adopted in his church the first year it

---

[58] Cf. Personal Files, R-42.

was proposed, and while there was some objection at the time, a year later he could write,

> The Assembly's Plan of Finance, introduced into our church a year ago, has proved every claim made for it by the Assembly, and has the hearty endorsement of the officers of our church. It is no longer an experiment with us, but is now approved by experience, and is cordially commended in its details to the entire congregation.[59]

After the success of this initial effort with the new Plan of Finance in Florence, the Secretary of the Assembly's Committee wrote him, saying,

> I am told that through your management this system has worked wonders in your church. I am, therefore, requesting that you give us a brief review of how you did the work, for publication. We are asking quite a few of the brethren to give similar testimonials that we may keep before the church every week the wisdom of this plan.[60]

One of his fellow ministers in another state wrote him,

> I would like very much to know what the basis of opposition of your officers was, what the attitude of the people was, how you managed it without giving offense, what the result has been both financially and reflexly upon the spiritual life and general efficiency of the church.[61]

---

[59]Letter of R.T.G. to the members of the Florence Presbyterian Church, Florence, South Carolina, March 25, 1925, In Personal Files, R-45.

[60]Letter of R. L. Walkup to R.T.G., January 16, 1915, In Personal Files, R-46.

[61]Letter of Richard Orme Flinn to R.T.G., April 29, 1915, In Personal Files, R-47.

During the first three years of the plan's operation in his Florence church, the contributions increased fron $4501 in 1913, with a per capita gift of $10.66, to $5726 in 1916, with a per capita gift of $11.85.[62]

Gillespie carried the same plan of finance to the Lexington church, and succeeded each year in raising the Budget. According to a congregational letter in the files, the canvass was made from house to house on an appointed Sunday in March. The members were asked to remain at home until they had been seen, and each member of the church was asked to subscribe and to make a weekly contribution. A second canvass was made in July, to secure subscriptions from the new members, and financial statements were mailed out each quarter.[63] Gillespie always insisted on keeping the Current Expense and Benevolent Funds separate, with two treasurers, and he helped his treasurers open up a special system of bookkeeping. After he had left Lexington, one of them wrote him,

> The treasurer's work is not at all difficult so far. It is nothing like the burden I feared it would be. With your plan, it will require but little time. Think

---

[62] Minutes of General Assembly, Presbyterian Church U.S., 1913, 1916.

[63] Letter of W. W. Yent to the members of the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, July 10, 1919, In Personal Files, R-48.

I can easily manage to get the distributions out on time.[64]

During his five years in Lexington, the gifts increased from a total of $11,196 with a per capita average of $29.00, to a total of $16,269 with an average of $32.00.[65]

The building program of the Louisville church placed an added financial burden on the congregation, but Gillespie found the same methods of church finance adequate for the needs there. The total gifts increased from $14,701 in 1921, to $30,514 in 1924, with a per capita increase of from $30.00 to $73.00 per member.[66] This large increase was due not only to the building program, but also to the Million Dollar Campaign for Education the previous year, to which the members of the First Church subscribed more than $27,000. Gillespie's approach to his people in making a financial appeal is seen in the following letter, sent to the congregation in the 1922 canvass.

> A long cherished dream is being realized in the completion of our new church. I am sure we are grateful to our God.

---

[64] Letter of W. S. Webb to R.T.G., May 16, 1922, In Personal Files, R-49.

[65] Minutes of General Assembly, Presbyterian Church U.S., 1917-1921.

[66] Ibid.

The new church, the strategic location, and new enthusiasm combine to assure us that the future is full of hope and promise. The church is on the threshold of a new era crowded with possibilities. Opportunities to serve are awaiting us on every hand.

In the combined budget we face the first test of our earnestness, and we will meet that test, whatever the sacrifices. I wish to ask your cooperation in the following respects:

1. Come to the preparatory service next Sunday at 11 o'clock and bring the entire family with you.
2. Be present during the afternoon at the address on the outside of this letter till the canvassers reach you. If the address is not correct, notify the church Secretary.
3. Help the canvassers in every way possible, and be prepared to make your pledge cheerfully, remembering that the budget is one-third larger than last year.
4. Pray through this matter, and "Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."[67]

Gillespie had always been happy in the pastorate, and had refused frequent opportunities to leave it. It was not until the fall of 1924, when the call came from Columbia Seminary, that he could be induced to leave a work so close to his heart. Some years later, in writing to a friend who had spent many years in one pastorate, he said:

> I cannot think of any experience that could be more satisfactory than to have labored for thirty years in one field and to have found so large a place in the hearts of a splendid people. My own pastorates have

---

[67]Letter of R.T.G. to the Members of the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, March 8, 1922, In Personal Files, R-50.

been shorter, which is a source of sincere regret to me, but I have never made a change from choice, and I have never been restless in any field I have served. In my last pastorate in Louisville, I had no other thought but to make that church my life's work, and I would doubtless be there now if the call had not come from the Seminary.[68]

---

[68]Letter of R.T.G. to J. B. Hutton, December 4, 1926, In Seminary Files, C-6.

CHAPTER V

HIS WORK AS PREACHER

It has already been observed that on one occasion, Gillespie, in making a change of pasterate, expressed the hope that in his new field he might find more time for study.[1] His ability along executive and administrative lines always resulted in a heavy demand on him for such duties, and it was a matter of regret to him that he was forced to use so much of his time in this way. The importance he placed on study is seen in the following letter, written as President of the Seminary, to one of the recent graduates:

> I hope you will continue to give yourself to your study with great diligence and thorough preparation. There is no phase of your work more important than that which is done in the study. What you do in the study will determine the quality of preaching that you do and will determine the success of your ministry throughout all the future.[2]

The writer himself recalls that in one of his last conversations with his father, this same matter was discussed. The son was planning to enter the seminary the following fall, and among other things his father warned

---

[1]Chapter IV, p. 69.

[2]Letter of R.T.G. to T. A. Smith, July 20, 1929. In Seminary Files, A-11.

SPENCE LIBRARY
Union Theological Seminary
RICHMOND, VA.

him of the danger of a minister's letting lesser things interfere with work in the study. He advised that the morning hours be kept strictly for this, and that nothing except emergency matters be allowed to interfere. He said that in his first pastorate, he had accepted too many outside duties to do full justice to this part of his work, and that he hoped his son would profit by his mistake.

Aside from the notebooks of his college and seminary days, there are few evidences of any special lines of study which Gillespie pursued. This would seem to indicate that practically all of his study time was given to the preparation of sermons. The writer has found among his father's papers more than four hundred sermon outlines. According to their notations, they formed the substance of his preaching in each of his pastorates, and will be used as the basis of most of the observations concerning his work as a preacher.

Theology. Gillespie received his theological training in the orthodox Calvinistic heritage, and there is no evidence that he ever departed from it. His sermons are about equally divided between the doctrinal and the practical, and in them he consistently urges the claims of Christianity from the conservative point of view. One of those who were associated with him in his ministry has

said concerning his theology:

> There never arose any sort of question in any mind as to the theological soundness of Dr. Gillespie. He loved the Word of God, and his mind found greatest satisfaction in the Calvinistic system of theology. He preached his convictions, and his convictions were heartily in accord with the system of theology set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith and found in the inspired Word of God.[3]

When, as President of the Seminary, he was asked concerning the Seminary's and his own position on the theory of evolution, he replied that, so far as he knew, every member of the faculty was orthodox on this point, and that for himself, "I do not accept the theory of evolution and am not an evolutionist. I believe that man, both body and soul, is a direct creation of God."[4]

Points of doctrinal emphasis. The emphases which would be expected with this theological position are found in his sermons. In all of the sermons, there is presupposed the spiritual destitution of man because of sin. This emphasis is brought out constantly, though there are not a great many sermons which deal exclusively with sin. His usual approach to sin was from the point of view of original

---

[3]Melton Clark, "Dr. Gillespie, the Pastor and Preacher", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:9, November,

[4]Letter of R.T.G. to John C. Blackburn, August 21, 1925, In Seminary Files, B-3.

sin, as the condition into which man is born because of the Fall. In a sermon on Sinners All, he points out how all men are in this condition, and adds,

> This is the distressing thing about the fact of sin, that so long as we continue in sin, there is no hope of change either in the condition or relation. We shall forever remain short of the Glory of God.[5]

He also dealt with individual sins, and in a sermon on David's sin, he points out how sin took gradual hold on him, until at last it completely mastered him in his sin against Uriah and Bath-sheba. He further points out both the immediate and the far-reaching effects of sin in David's life, and applies the whole lesson to the life of man today.[6] Gillespie also preached at times on the sins in the community. In a sermon on The Gospel for our City, he speaks against such forms of vice as liquor, gambling, Sabbath-breaking, and the like, and makes an appeal to the congregation, as individuals, to avoid such sins.[7]

As man's hope for deliverance from sin, Gillespie preached salvation through Jesus Christ. Christ was magnified in all of his preaching. In a sermon on The Pre-eminence of Christ, he begins by saying "If we have a just

---

[5]Sermon, "Sinners All." In Sermon Files, C-176.

[6]Sermon, "Thou Art the Man." In Sermon Files, C-4.

[7]Cf. Sermon Files, C-182.

appreciation of the meaning of Christianity, we will give Him a pre-eminent place in our life, first place, the place of distinction and mark.[8] He preached often on the example which Christ has set before men, but his chief emphasis was on the atoning death of Christ. Here he preached Christ as a penal substitute, and the vicarious efficacy of his death, holding Him forth as the sinner's only hope for salvation. In a sermon on The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, he says,

> Jesus who would save you has hurled himself between you and me and all the furies of hell, and he who is covered with his blood shall never be touched. Because his side was pierced, his blood was shed in death, those who trust him are saved from the bitter cup of spiritual death. To proclaim Him is to turn the key that opens the door of the Kingdom of Heaven.[9]

Another point of emphasis in Gillespie's preaching was the love of God as it is seen in Christ. In a sermon entitled My Son Give Me Thine Heart, which, according to its notations, was probably preached more than any other, Gillespie brought out this truth. He draws a vivid parallel between Jacob's love for Joseph and David's love for Absalom, and points out that a father's love for his son does not depend on the son's character, but rather on

---

[8]Sermon, "That He Might Have Preeminence." In Sermon Files, B-5.

[9]Cf., Sermon Files, C-42.

the relation of sonship. This truth he again points out in the parable of the Prodigal Son and the elder brother. He uses these evidences of God's love to make a plea for men's love for God, closing with the plea found in the Book of Proverbs, "My son, give me thine heart." The writer recalls having heard this sermon on several occasions, and the joy which his father found in preaching it.[10]

He also brought into his sermons constantly, the reformed doctrine of Salvation by Faith. In a sermon on The Blessed Assurance to them that are in Christ Jesus, he points out that the Union of the believer with Christ is both a representative (Federal) one, and a vital one, (as the branch and the vine), and it is a union which is made effective by faith in the heart of the believer. The Christian with this faith has no fear of the condemnation of God, and his life is transformed both inwardly and outwardly, so that 'he walks no longer after the flesh but after the spirit.'[11]

On the Sacramental Sundays, Gillespie would usually deliver a Communion Meditation which centered around the

---

[10] Cf. Sermon Files, D-50.

[11] Cf. Sermon Files, C-63.

death of Christ and its significance. In one of these meditations, he sought to answer the question, "Why did Christ die?". The answer given is a three-fold one. First, Christ died that we should live together with Him. Life comes only through this sacrificial vicarious death of Christ. Second, Christ died that He might make known the riches of His Father's glory. God designed that His glory should be revealed in every created thing, but especially and supremely in man, made in His image. When man utterly failed to show forth God's glory because of sin, it was to accomplish this design that Christ died. Finally, it was necessary that Christ die, for righteousness could come in no other way. If righteousness could come of the law, then Christ died in vain.[12]

Another doctrine implicit in most of his sermons is that of the Holy Spirit's work in the plan of redemption, and the Christian's need of Him in the daily life, though there are few sermons dealing exclusively with this doctrine. Another doctrine on which there are few explicit sermons is the Reformed doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, though again this is implicit in many of the other sermons. There is a sermon on Romans 8:28, "All things

---

[12]Sermon, "A Memorial Of The Lord's Death", In Sermon Files, C-32.

work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose." Speaking of this text, he said, "While we may not always know the underlying motive in the providences of God, we can certainly recognize the underlying principle of God's love, which guarantees the statement of the text." This love he finds in Christ. It behooves Christians to have this faith, he says, in order that they may go out and help and comfort others who have it not.[13] Another of the Reformed doctrines on which there are few explicit sermons is that of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, though his close adherence to the Scriptures and his interpretation of them shows that he held a high view of Inspiration. Neither is much emphasis placed on Eschatology, though he believed in the Second Coming and at times pointed out the necessity of preparation for it. He did not hold the pre-millenial view, however, and his use of the doctrine was mainly for practical admonition. In a sermon on Matthew 24:24, "Be ye also ready", he says,

> In every period of the church the coming of Messiah has been the hope and inspiration of the church. He will certainly come, and his coming will be glorious; but this text touches only the importance of being ready to meet Him.

---

[13]Cf. Sermon Files, C-22.

In the discussion he points out that we must meet Him whether we are prepared or not, that preparation for the meeting is not a passing incident but a fundamental necessity, and that to prepare for his coming means (1) to acknowledge God and to accept his plan of salvation as the only way; (2) to repent of sin and to turn from it unto God with the desire and purpose to seek a life of righteousness and service; and (3) to come more and more into the spirit of God, and to seek a more intimate and helpful fellowship with Him through the presence and help of the Holy Spirit.[14]

Points of practical emphasis. Gillespie's practical turn of mind expressed itself constantly in his sermons. Even in those sermons where the emphasis was doctrinal, he usually closed with a practical application.

Fundamental in his practical appeal was his emphasis on the church and the importance of the church's place in the world. His references to the church were usually from the practical, rather than the doctrinal point of view, though his sermons indicate that he held to the orthodox position of the purely spiritual function of the church in the world. His constant effort was to stir up the loyalty of his people for the church and her mission. In a sermon

---

[14]Cf. Sermon Files, C-121.

on The Lukewarm Church, he warns his people of the church's accountability before God for her lukewarmness, and adds,

> The need of the church today is the change which is wrought in the new birth, and with the new birth, faith, repentance, and conversion, and love, the righteousness of Christ, and lives yielded to the teaching of the Holy Spirit."[15]

As has been already seen, in most of his churches he pushed a vigorous financial program, and there are a number of sermons intended to stir up the spirit of giving among his people. In one of his sermons, preparatory to an Every Member Canvass, he begins by pointing out the importance of the budget in the work of the church, and suggests the following steps in raising it: (1) Give proportionately, (2) Give regularly and systematically, (3) Everyone give, (4) At this time, concentrate on the church budget, (5) Give cheerfully.[16]

Another phase of the church's work which received constant emphasis in his preaching was evangelism. In most of his sermons, he was pressing for a verdict, either for surrender for the first time or for a reconsecration to Christ and the church. Also, he constantly

---

[15] Cf. Sermon Files, C-1.

[16] Sermon, "Every Member Canvass, Preparatory", In Sermon Files, C-18.

lays upon his people their responsibility for personal evangelism in the winning of souls. In one sermon on the subject Fishers of Men, he points out that, as in apostolic days, the first task of Christians is to become soul winners. To do this, they must love the work, must be constantly at it, and must always rely on Christ for help.[17] In this connection, Gillespie also made frequent appeals to the young people for full time Christian service, pointing out both the needs and the rewards of this kind of service.[18]

Other practical phases of the church's work which received his frequent attention were the educational and missionary work of the church. At least once each year, he would preach a sermon on the Church and the Sunday School, and at stated times he would make the missionary appeal. Several of these sermons are filled with statistics concerning the need and the opportunity, and close with the usual appeal for life and possessions.[19] Also, there are sermons used on special occasions, such as

---

[17] Cf. Sermon Files, C-12.

[18] Sermon, "A Plenteous Harvest But Laborers Scarce", In Sermon Files, C-46.

[19] Sermons, "The Sunday School and the Church", In Sermon Files, C-47, and "This Is a Day of Good Tidings", In Sermon Files, C-67.

Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and the New Year, and sermons for the installation of the various officers of the church, where he urges the practical demands of Christian leadership. He teaches that church officers, above all, should hold "to the mysteries of the faith in a good conscience, and be loyal to Christ and His Church."[20]

Another matter which finds frequent mention in his sermons is that of the Home, and, in connection with it, the importance of the Family Altar in the home. In a sermon entitled Religion in the Home, he points out that the perils of the home today are caused by stress of modern life, varied interests, worldly pleasures, and materialistic ideas. Some of the safe-guards which he offers are Bible study, personal prayer, and the family altar.[21] Prayer was often the subject of his sermons.

There are also frequent appeals in his sermons for the ethical fruits of the Christian life, such as loyalty, humility, unselfishness, service, love, and most of all, consecration.[22] Sometimes he uses character sketches from both the Old and New Testaments to enforce these

---

[20]Sermon, "How Men Ought to Behave Themselves in the House of God", In Sermon Files, C-65.

[21]Cf. Sermon Files, C-149.

[22]Cf. Sermon Files, C-93, C-102, C-90, C-143, C-154, C-172, D-7, D-8.

lessons and often mentions the opportunities and privileges which are before the individual and the church in the Christian life.[23] Another phase of the Christian life which he discusses is its difficulty and reward. In a sermon The Christian Victory, His Conflict and His Crown, based on Paul's experience, he points out that though the conflict may be continuous and strenuous, yet there is an eternal crown to the righteous, and that Paul was sure of such because he was sure of Christ. This is also true of everyone who will fight the good fight of faith.[24]

Methods of sermonizing. Practically none of Gillespie's sermons are written out in full. They are mostly briefs, written in longhand on two or three pages of medium sized notebook paper. These notes were apparently carried into the pulpit with him, though the writer recalls that in Lexington, he would often use Monday mornings to write out the notes for the sermons he had preached the day before. This may indicate that some of his preaching was extempore. An illustration of his method of sermonizing is found in the following sermon, which was one of those preached most

---

[23]Cf. Sermons, "The Inheritance of Caleb", "The Blight of Achan's Sin", "Lot's Tent", "The Open Door", "The Added Things of Life", In Personal Files, C-35, D-7, D-8, C-185, C-162.

[24]Cf. Sermon Files, C-202.

often.

AND PETER

Mark 16:7

Intro: Why a special message to Peter? Answer a conjecture; but this certain, that Peter's desertion of Christ in his greatest need most despicable and under circumstances most aggravated.
Discn: Love's Beckoning.
This special message to Peter is a revelation of the character of Christ's love for the sinner.
I. It is unconditioned by change in the heart and conduct of the sinner. His love always the same. Distinguish between His love for and His displeasure in the sinner.

Especially important to train the young and our children to know the constancy of His love. Knowledge of that fact should stimulate to greater love and loyalty and better effort on our own part. Also his displeasure in sin.
II. Shows special concern for those who have special need.

Consideration for Peter's inevitable mental and spiritual depression prompts Him to send a special message to Peter. What such a message meant to Peter. His special message and special messengers in the hour of life's needs.

Illustrate. See the Billy Sunday of Japan loss of wife.
III. His love never loses sight of the individual. Not one is ever lost in the crowd. All but Jno. deserted him, and all must be re-established and reassured, but Peter especially. There were upward of 500, but Peter not overlooked. The great problems of the kingdom on his mind and only 40 days and 500 disciples to prepare for the development of all his plans, but there is time for a special word to Peter. Illustrate this third point.

The child (in a large family of fine, husky boys and girls) who was for 16 years a hopeless, helpless invalid died. The parents heartbroken, their grief very great. Explained that they, of course, loved all the children, but felt they loved this one more than

all the others, because she seemed to need them more than all they.

So likewise he knows all his flock by name.

Conclusion: Three observations. (a) If Peter, then why not any sinner, however gross his sin; (b) His special message whenever and however received, should be accepted as an evidence of his unwavering love; (c) The Peter who answered the beckoning love of Jesus was not the same Peter who boasted of his loyalty, who drew his sword, who followed afar off, who sat and warmed his hands and then denied his Lord. Since then the cock had crowed. (Bitter tears, broken heart, deep repentance) A new Peter answered love's beckoning call and met Jesus on the mountain.[25]

Evangelistic series. Gillespie had numerous calls on him for holding evangelistic services, and usually he would accept one or more of these engagements each year. In a clipping from a Memphis, Tennessee paper, where he held a meeting in March, 1920, the following item appeared:

> To stimulate the spiritual life of the membership of the church the first week of the revival has been the chief aim of Rev. R. T. Gillespie, pastor of Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church of Lexington, Ky., who is assisting Rev. J. B. Carpenter, pastor of Evergreen Presbyterian Church. In this he has been most successful. Large congregations and widespread interest has marked the services thus far.
>
> Dr. Gillespie prefers to be known as a pastor rather than as an evangelist, although he recently assisted in a remarkably successful revival at the First Presbyterian Church at Charleston, W. Va., as well as a number of places in West Kentucky. He will continue to preach for Dr. Carpenter throughout next week.[26]

---

[25] Cf. Sermon Files, D-41.

[26] In Personal Scrapbook #3

Among his sermons is a set of sermons which he used in most of his evangelistic services. The subjects, in the order in which he usually preached them, are listed as follows for a two week's series:[27]

Monday - - P.M. - "The Fulness of God."
Tuesday - A.M. - "Prayer In Personal Work"
" - P.M. - "A Growing Church"
Wednesday- A.M. - "The Church At Work"
" - P.M. - "The Luke Warm Church"
Thursday - A.M. - "That He Might Have Preeminence"
" - P.M. - "The Consecrated Church"
Friday - A.M. - "Personal Soul Saving"
" - P.M. - "The Blight of Achan's Sin"
Saturday - A.M. - "Lot's Choice"
" - P.M. - "Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out"
Sunday - A.M. - "The Power of Silent Influence"
" - P.M. - "Divine Assurance"
Monday - A.M. - "The Father's Will and the Lost"
" - P.M. - "What of the Night?"
Tuesday - A.M. - "A Man's Life"
" - P.M. - "Salvation Neglected"
Wednesday- A.M. - "The Stewardship of Life"
" - P.M. - "And Peter"
Thursday - A.M. - "The Ark of Our God"
" - P.M. - "Sowing and Reaping"
Friday - A.M. - "Yet Lackest Thou One Thing"
" - P.M. - "A Warning to the Strong"
Saturday - A.M. - "Jesus at the Closed Door"
" - P.M. - "The Look that Saves"
Sunday - A.M. - "The God Whom You Will Serve"
" afternoon - "A Corn of Wheat"
" - P.M. - "My Son Give Me Thine Heart"

General observations on sermons. A general survey of the sermons yields the following observations:

First, the sermons are overwhelmingly Scriptural.

---

[27] In Sermon Files, D-51.

Out of a total of four hundred and four sermons in the collection, all but forty-two are based on some definite verse or passage of Scripture. Of these forty-two, all but ten are in some way related to the Scriptures. The remaining ten are general addresses, delivered on various occasions.

Second, most of the sermons are taken from the New Testament. Only seventy-two out of the total number are based on Old Testament passages. Of those which are based on the Old Testament, most are taken from the Psalms. There are not many sermons based on the prophets, and in those which are, Isaiah is used most often.

Third, the social gospel, as such, had little place in his preaching. While there are sermons on the social life of the people, yet the approach is through the individual rather than through the social order. There are no sermons on the race problem, sins of the economic order, and the like, and during the war years, Gillespie was taken up by the idealism of the day, and seems to have consented without protest to America's part in the war. He did show frequent concern during those years for the spiritual interests of the soldiers.

Fourth, most of the sermons adhere closely to the Scriptural text. His development of his sermons was more logical and practical than imaginative and pictorial. There are numerous illustrations, drawn mostly from the common

experiences and homely incidents in life, but there are not many references to literature, and about the only poetry which is quoted is an occasional hymn.

Fifth, the predominant note throughout all his preaching was the pleading note. Rarely does he close a sermon without a personal application of the text, and without an earnest plea for surrender and consecration to God through faith in Jesus Christ and loyalty to the church.

Public prayer. Apparently most of Gillespie's public prayers were extempore. The writer recalls that he often used the sixty-seventh Psalm as an invocation. The only written prayer among his papers follows. It is probably a good example of what his public prayers were like.

> Our Father in Heaven - We meet on this day, Day of all the week the best, Emblem of eternal rest. We are thy people, bought with a price, redeemed with the blood, saved by grace, joint heirs together with Jesus Christ of thy gracious promise of life. May we have and show this day the spirit of God in our service. We are unworthy because we live in sin. We are yet in large measure conformed to this world. Neither are we wholly transformed by the renewing of our wills. Pride rules our wills.
>
> Sin in large measure has dominion over us, but it is our fault. We are not obedient to thy Spirit. Selfishness is a besetting sin. We seek our own good with undue diligence, and think too little of the good of others.
>
> We have no deep and abiding sense of the presence of God who dwells in his holy temple which is his church and the hearts of his people who compose the church.
>
> God be merciful unto us sinners. Wherever sin abounds, let thy grace much more abound.

We pray for a spirit of repentance, for a revival of religion in all our lives, greater faith in thee, closer alliance with thee, a better understanding of thy plans and purposes; and make us zealous of good works. Teach us to do thy will, Oh God.

If any in this congregation have backslidden, recover and restore them and restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us with thy willing spirit. Then shall we teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Give to thy cause the students of our University and Colleges. Incline their hearts unto the Lord. Make them thine own, that as trained leaders they may lead the state in righteousness, may live in the fear of God.

Let thine outstretched hand lay hold upon our soldiers, especially the men of Camp Buell and our own men who are in the service. Let thy truth be their shield and buckler.

Give to the cause of all the allies increasing success and ultimate victory, that peace with righteousness may be established in all the earth, that helpless peoples and nations may have security in life and possessions - that women and children may be secure, that righteousness and justice may be defended everywhere - that all men may know that thou art God. O God, thou ruler of all the universe, vindicate now thy right to rule and establish thy name and thy glorious majesty over all the earth.

In Jesus name, Amen.[28]

Delivery and effect. Much of Gillespie's strength in his preaching was in his delivery. As has been seen in the description of his personal characteristics, he had a good appearance, and an excellent speaking voice. One of his former members who was somewhat hard of hearing wrote him, "When you were here I sat way back and could hear you

---

[28]Cf. Sermon Files, C-189.

as you have a clear good ringing voice.[29] A former fellow pastor writes the following concerning his wife's recollection of the quality of his voice: "She said she could still hear your father pronounce the name of your sister, as he often did in Lexington, with a wonderfully rich, tender inflection.[30] The writer recalls that his father, in coaching him on different occasions for declamation contests, always insisted on simplicity and clearness of speech. This was characteristic of his own public delivery, and the general effect of his preaching has been described as follows:

> Dr. Gillespie's preaching was marked by an earnest zeal in the presentation of the simple gospel of salvation by faith. Always dignified and of a serious turn of mind, his messages were spiritual and uplifting to those who came to the church for worship and instruction. Under his direction the services of our church were attractive by virtue of his own deep sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which created always the atmosphere of reverence and the feeling of faith, hope and love.[31]

---

[29]Letter of H. T. Pollard to R.T.G., January 11, 1927. In Seminary Files, C-1.

[30]Letter of Benjamin Jay Bush to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., April 22, 1938. In Personal Files, S-2.

[31]Melton Clark, On. Cit. p. 10. Quoting letter of T. F. Gordon.

CHAPTER VI

HIS WORK AS PRESBYTER

One of Gillespie's former colleagues, in speaking of his work as a Presbyter, has said the following concerning him:

> There is just one other phase of Dr. Gillespie's ministry which I am constrained to mention, and that was his fidelity and activity as a presbyter. He took with utmost seriousness his relation to the courts of the Church - the Session, the Presbytery, the Synod, and the Assembly when he was elected as a representative to the last named. It did not occur to him that attendance on the Church courts was a privilege to be used at his option. It was a privilege that he enjoyed, but it was foremost a duty which he always gladly performed. He gave his earnest thought to the problems confronting the church, and in the Church courts he became recognized as a leader whose judgment could be relied on, and whose willingness to participate in labors, however arduous, was unfailing.[1]

His work in South Carolina. From the very beginning of his ministry, Gillespie seems to have had heavy calls on him in the work of the Presbyteries and Synods of which he was a member. One of his first responsibilities in South Carolina was to serve as chairman of the Board and teacher of Bible in the Presbyterial High School at Florence. This school had been organized in 1903, as a

---

[1] Melton Clark, "Dr. Gillespie, Pastor and Preacher", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:11, November, 1930.

preparatory school for the young people of that section who were planning to go off to college. It was coeducational, and a boarding department was operated for the out of town students. There are numerous letters in Gillespie's correspondence, concerning his efforts to help those attend who were without adequate financial resources. The school was controlled by a Board appointed from Pee Dee Presbytery, and during his first two years in Florence, Gillespie was Chairman of the Board and teacher of Bible. In 1911, the school ceased to operate and was merged into the public school system.[2] At this time, Gillespie gave personal attention to the transferring of all the furniture and movable equipment to Thornwell Orphanage at Clinton, South Carolina. Some years later, one of his former students who had since entered the ministry wrote him,

> I remember with such profitable pleasure my first course in the Bible under you at the Presbyterial High School. Accept my belated expression of gratitude for starting me so that the study of The Book has been a source of genuine joy.[3]

During these years, Gillespie was also called on to continue the labors of his student days in soliciting funds

---

[2]F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, Editors, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850. pp.369-70.

[3]Letter of Rupert McGregor to R.T.G., January 9, 1925, In Personal Files, T-32.

for the cause of Christian Education. In 1912, a campaign for $200,000 was launched by the Synod for its schools and colleges. Gillespie's former success in raising money seems to have been well known, and there are several letters from the Chairman of the Campaign, asking him to come help finish up the effort in various parts of the Synod. One of his fellow ministers, in a time of emergency, wrote Gillespie as follows, asking for his help:

> Now my trouble is this: I was assigned to Abbeville County to raise $1000 and I do not see how I am to do it. Bridgman appointed me against my judgment. I have never had any experience raising money and this is rather a severe thing to cut ones teeth upon. I told Bridgman to get you to do it, realizing at the time that you have done far more than your share in this matter but the thing is in a critical condition and needs experienced men to carry it out. He said that you were not present and he did not feel like taking the liberty of making you responsible but he would try to get you to help me and told me to do the same thing.[4]

In another place, there is a letter from the chairman of the Campaign, enclosing an expense check and adding, "We thank you very much for the help you have rendered us and hope you will let us call on you again as we may need you."[5]

About this time, a Campaign was launched throughout the Assembly for a Million and a Half for the general ad-

---

[4]Letter of George M. Wilcox to R.T.G., March 1, 1913, In Personal Files, S-7.

[5]Letter of A. C. Bridgman to R.T.G., July 8, 1912, In Personal Files, S-8.

vancement of the church's program at home and abroad, and Gillespie was named Chairman for Pee Dee Presbytery. There are letters from the general Chairman, making suggestions for the promotion of the campaign, and records of Gillespie's efforts to carry out the program by holding Presbyterial conferences, sending out letters, and the like.[6]

Gillespie also entered into the evangelistic program of the church at large, and there is a letter from the Superintendent of Local Home Missions for the Synod of South Carolina, giving instructions as to what steps to take in preparing for a proposed church wide effort. This movement was sponsored by the Layman's Missionary Movement in the church, and Gillespie was assigned the responsibility for working up a delegation from his Presbytery to the Home Mission Convention to be held in Memphis early in 1913.[7] There is also a letter from the Chairman of the Assembly's Committee on Evangelism, asking him to remain over for a continuation conference in helping plan a program of aggressive evangelistic advance.[8]

---

[6]Cf. Letters in Personal Files, S-9, S-10, S-11, S-12, S-13, S-14.

[7]Cf. Letters in Personal Files, S-15, S-16, S-17, S-18.

[8]Cf. Letter in Personal Files, S-19.

In 1915, Gillespie was chairman of Home Missions in his Presbytery.[9] In the same year, he was Chairman of the Committee on Schools and Colleges for the Presbytery, but he later resigned this office. In turning over the files and record books to another Chairman, Gillespie wrote, "I do hope you will have good success as a reward for your effort. I was very sorry to give up the work, but circumstances made it necessary."[10] A year later, Gillespie was elected Secretary and Treasurer of this same Committee, with a salary of $300 per year, but he did not take it.[11] It is possible that at this time he was contemplating a change of pastorate, but another likely reason for his refusal was that at this time he was already over-crowded with Presbyterial duties. An insight into the demands which were placed upon him is seen in the following excerpt from one of his letters:

> Since returning to Florence, after my vacation on the Island, I have been absent for the greater part of two weeks conducting evangelistic services by appointment of Presbytery, and for a third week attending the meeting of Presbytery. During October we will

---

[9]Cf. Letter In Personal Files, S-20.

[10]Letter of R.T.G. to H. W. Pratt, November 9, 1915, In Personal Files, S-21.

[11]Letter of H. W. Pratt to R.T.G., October 28, 1916, In Personal Files, S-22.

> have an eight day meeting at Florence, followed by a week at Synod. Immediately after the adjournment of Synod I must hold a meeting at Fork in this Presbytery, by Presbyterial appointment. Even if this meeting does not include the first Sunday in November, which I fear it will, you can readily see that it will be unwise for me to add another day to these which I must necessarily take out of the work here. In addition to the above appointments, I have just received notice that I am expected at the state convention of the Christian Endeavor, which meets at Laurens Nov. 5th-7th. I fear I shall be compelled to decline this invitation, though I have a great desire to be present.[12]

Gillespie was President of the Columbia Seminary Alumni Association in 1915, and during that year an effort was made to secure funds from the Alumni for a new Professorship.[13] While the effort was not as productive as had been hoped, the President of the Seminary wrote him saying, "I thank you for the valuable help you have rendered; I appreciate your generosity and work in giving your time to this service of your alma mater."[14] One of his last pieces of work before leaving South Carolina was another effort to raise funds for the Seminary. He was off canvassing in Florida in December, 1916, when the call to Lexington came.

---

[12] Letter of R.T.G. to Horatio C. Hughes, September 23, 1915, In Personal Files, S-23.

[13] Cf. Letters In Personal Files, S-24, S-25.

[14] Letter of Thornton Whaling to R.T.G., October 27, 1915, In Personal Files, S-26.

After Gillespie had decided to accept the Lexington church and to move to Kentucky, the clerk of the Presbytery wrote him as follows:

> I enclose your certificate. I hate to see you go. The Presbytery will miss you sorely and personally I will miss you very much indeed. I don't know when I have hated so much to see one of our members leave. You have endeared yourself to every one of us and our best wishes and prayers will follow you.[15]

The Kentucky educational movement. Gillespie's chief work as a Presbyter during his Kentucky ministry was in behalf of the educational institutions supported by that Synod. He was appointed Chairman and Treasurer of the Executive Committee on Schools and Colleges at the meeting of Synod held in Lexington in January 1919. This meeting had been postponed from the previous fall because of the influenza epidemic of 1918. A change was made in the educational set-up of the Synod at this meeting. Formerly, the work of schools and orphanages had been combined into one Committee. At this meeting, the work was divided between two committees, the Executive Committee on Orphan's Homes and the Executive Committee on Schools and Colleges. Gillespie was given the responsibility, as chairman of the latter committee, to promote the in-

---

[15] Letter of A. H. McAfee to R.T.G., January 17, 1917, In Personal Files, S-27.

terests of the Synods schools and colleges throughout the churches, and to collect sixteen per cent of the church's benevolent gifts for distribution to the various schools. The schools which the Synod supported at this time were the Seminary in Louisville, Sayre College, (a preparatory and Junior College for girls in Lexington), and two mountain schools, Lees Collegiate Institute in Jackson and Matthew T. Scott Junior Academy and Industrial School in Phelps, Kentucky. His duties in the distribution of the school funds began with the new church year, the first of April. On April 29th, he sent out a circular letter to all the benevolent treasurers of the churches, reminding them of the change and urging them to send their remittances to him promptly, in order that he might send them on to the schools.[16]

During the period between April 1919, when Gillespie began his new duties, and the meeting of Synod in October, he pushed his cause vigorously in the churches. Each month, he would send out either a financial statement or a report of some kind, in an effort to secure funds for his cause;[17] but on September 26th he was

---

[16]Cf. Letter In Personal Files, S-28.

[17]Cf. Letters In Personal Files, S-29, S-30, S-31, S-33, S-34, S-35.

forced to write to the pastors of the Synod that, of one hundred and fifty-seven churches in the Synod, only fifty-eight had sent one or more remittances for his cause, while ninety-nine churches had sent nothing.[18] The total amount collected and disbursed was $4,680,27.[19]

Gillespie had already come to see, by the meeting of Synod that fall (1919), that the educational work of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky was on an inadequate basis. Kentucky was a border line Synod, with a total of thirty-five thousand Presbyterians. About twenty thousand of these were in the U.S.Church (Southern) and the remainder in the U.S.A.Church (Northern). The U.S.A.Synod was likewise carrying an inadequate educational program. It had a joint interest with the U.S.Synod in the Seminary, and in addition to this, helped support Centre College and Kentucky College for Women in Danville, and two mountain schools, Witherspoon College at Buckhorn and Pikeville College at Pikeville.

Gillespie came to the conclusion that the wise thing to do was for both Synods to unite in a joint effort for the strengthening of their educational work. It happened that at this time, the Chairman of the educa-

---

[18] Cf. Letter In Personal Files, S-32.

[19] Cf. Letter In Personal Files, S-36.

tional work for the U.S.A.Synod was one of Gillespie's fellow pastors in Lexington, Dr. Benjamin Jay Bush of the Second Church. Dr. Bush tells the story of the beginning of the Kentucky Educational Movement as follows:

> Your father was the organizer and inspirer of the educational campaign in Kentucky. He called at our home one afternoon saying, "The Kentuckians have not done much for education in recent years. Both Synods should be ashamed of their negligence." He said, "Presbyterians seem to be farther apart in Kentucky than anywhere else. I have come to see you because perhaps a man from Michigan and one from Carolina might help bring them together." (Each of us was chairman of education in our respective Synods.) "I thought it might be providential that we two, who were warm friends and good neighbors, should have been chairmen."[20]

This conversation occurred sometime before the meeting of the U.S.Synod in the fall of 1919, for at that meeting, Gillespie's committee proposed that they ask the Synod U.S.A. "to unite with us in a joint campaign to further the interest of this cause and to provide a complete unified system of education for the combined church."[21] At this meeting, it also reaffirmed its action of former meetings, expressing an interest in Centre College, and its desire that a way might be found to establish organic relations between Centre and the two Synods.[22]

---

[20]Letter of Benjamin Jay Bush to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., April 22, 1938, In Personal Files, S-2.

[21]Cf. Report In Personal Files, S-37, p.3.

[22]Cf. Report In Personal Files, S-38.

Nothing definite was done at the 1919 Synods, however, and the educational work of both Synods was continued along its usual lines for the next year. During this year, however, Gillespie and Bush continued their thinking and planning together, having in mind as their ultimate purpose the launching of a million dollar campaign for all the schools. They conferred with the heads of the various institutions, in making their plans, and all agreed that this kind of action was desirable and that some kind of joint action was necessary if progress was to be made. Finally, on October 1, 1920, Gillespie and Bush brought their respective committees together for a conference in Lexington, to which they also invited representatives of the schools. The result of this meeting was a decision by each committee to recommend to their respective Synods that a joint committee be appointed, looking to the launching of the proposed million dollar campaign, and that this committee be empowered to put on this campaign at the time and under the conditions which seemed best in its judgment.[23] As a result of these recommendations, both Synods took action at their 1920 meetings, setting up commissions with power to act jointly on all matters pertaining to their educational

---

[23]Cf. Minutes, In Personal Files, S-39.

programs and with authority to work toward the launching of a campaign at an opportune time.[24]

Even after this was accomplished, however, the difficulties ahead seemed, at times, almost insurmountable. Some of these difficulties have been described by Gillespie's colleague in the undertaking, as follows:

> Our first difficulty lay in the non-cooperative attitude on the part of prominent people in both Synods. The U.S.Synod at the very outset was more cooperative than the U.S.A.Synod. Another barrier was the insistence of members in the U.S.Church that Centre College should be brought under church control if the church were to undergird Centre financially. There was objection among the trustees of Centre to bring Centre under church control. They agreed to do so upon being guaranteed $100,000 which was to be set aside as a pension fund for the Centre professors. They were not willing to accept promises, insisting upon hard cash.[25]

Another difficulty was found in the proposed distribution of funds. On the basis of a million dollar drive campaign, the U.S.A. schools would receive $600,000, while the U.S. schools would receive only $400,000. Speaking of this, Dr. Bush says,

> Since the U.S.Synod was stronger than the U.S.A. Synod, it was notable to expect that more money would be received from the U.S.Synod and more given to the institutions associated with the U.S.A.Synod. Very naturally and justly there was objection to this. But your father insisted that the effort ought to be lifted above the U.S. and the U.S.A. traditions. But for

---

[24]Cf. Minutes, In Personal Files, 5-40, 6-41.

[25]Cf. Letter of Benjamin Jay Bush to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Loc. Cit.

> Your father's absolute fairness and utter unselfishness, the campaign would never have gotten started. He said the stronger Synod should bear the bigger load, and do it for the united Presbyterian need of Kentucky. He not only conceived the idea, but his exulted views guaranteed the campaign.[26]

The first meeting of the Joint Commission was held in the Louisville Seminary, November 17, 1920. Gillespie was chosen Chairman. It was decided at this meeting that overtures would be made to the trustees of Centre College and Kentucky College for Women that they be brought under church control, and that the commission begin making plans for the campaign for $1,000,000. It was evident that the first obstacle was the guaranteeing of $100,000 to Centre for coming under church control. Gillespie and Bush were appointed a committee to secure an underwriting fund to the amount of $100,000, and their churches were requested to release them temporarily for this purpose.[27] Centre was then at the height of her popularity, because of her phenomenal football team of those years, and would serve as the key school in popularizing the campaign before the general public. As other plans had already been considered by the Centre Board for the raising of funds, it was neces-

---

[26] Ibid.

[27] Cf. Minutes In Personal Files, 3-42.

sary that the church leaders act promptly if they were to achieve their end. Gillespie and Bush immediately took the road for the securing of this fund, and between the seventeenth of November and the end of the year, their task was completed. Concerning this campaign, Bush has written:

> So your father and I went through the state, raising a one hundred thousand dollar guarantee fund. These were pledges to the trustees of Centre College. The signers were legally bound to pay the pledge in case the campaign failed. We journeyed from Ashland to Paducah and this won for me the friendship of your father which I shall prize forever. He used to say facetiously on these trips that it was humorous for a "damn yankee" and a man through whose grandfather's estate Sherman had marched, to be seeking to unite Kentuckians for Kentucky.
>
> . . . Whenever we approached people for money and they were caustic and critical, your father became the more magnanimous and persuasive. Whether we saw one man alone in his office or store, seeking subscriptions, or met with a session, or took part in a rally, it was soon evident that your father's heart was in that enterprize. You know the story of the heart of Robert Bruce. Your father's heart was just as really in this great undertaking in Kentucky for Christian Education.[28]

In Gillespie's files is a list of eighty-four men whose pledges varied between $500 and $5000 for this underwriting fund.[29] These notes were presented to the Center Board as security for the first hundred thousand received

---

[28]Cf. Letter of Benjamin Jay Bush to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Loc. Cit.

[29]Cf. List In Personal Files, S-43.

in the proposed campaign. Gillespie and Bush reported the success of their effort to the second meeting of the Joint Commission on December 29, 1920.[30]

With the raising of this fund, the first step had been taken, but the actual launching of the campaign was delayed because of the necessary time consumed in ironing out difficulties and differences. In some ways, this period was the most difficult and dangerous for the whole enterprize. The failure of any part of their plans might have caused the failure of all. Concerning this, Dr. Bush writes:

> When things were most discouraging and our meetings failed of achievement, he would always say, "Do you think we can get them together again next week or should we wait a little longer?" His patience effectually wore down all opposition, and because he gave so liberally of his money and time and effort, he virtually shamed many people into giving for the biggest thing the Presbyterians in Kentucky had undertaken for many years.[31]

At the meeting of the U.S.Synod in Paris in the fall of 1921, Gillespie was able to report in behalf of the Joint Commission that,

> Five meetings have been held during the year, all of which were characterized by cordiality, mutual confidence, and singleness of purpose. These conferences have resulted in a better understanding of our common

---

[30]Cf. Minutes In Personal Files, 3-42.

[31]Cf. Letter of Benjamin Jay Bush to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Loc. Cit.

> educational problems, and a more earnest desire and fixed purpose to unite the forces of our two churches in planning and developing jointly an educational system adequate to meet all the requirements of both churches.[32]

He was further able to report that satisfactory amendments had been made to the charters of the Seminary, of Centre College, and of Kentucky College for Women, to satisfy the requirements of both Synods, and that an agreement had been reached concerning Sayre School for girls in Lexington and the Home Mission Schools in the Mountains.

He reported that the Commission was now ready to enter upon the million dollar campaign with the following division of funds:

A. The first $100,000 plus interest thereon shall be paid to Centre College in lieu of the notes of the Synod and of the accompanying notes of the guarantors.

B. That the remainder of the following appropriations be made:
   (a) Three-ninths up to $300,000 be appropriated to the Kentucky Theological Seminary.
   (b) Two-ninths up to $200,000 to Centre College.
   (c) Two-ninths up to $200,000 to Kentucky College for Women.
   (d) One-ninth up to $100,000 be apportioned to the Commission of the U.S. Synod to be used as they may direct.
   (e) One-ninth up to $100,000 be apportioned to the Commission of the U.S.A. Synod to be used as they may direct.

---

[32] Minutes of Synod of Kentucky, 1921, pp. 11-14. In Personal Files, S-44.

(f) And that any surplus above $1,000,000 and all expenses, be divided equally between the two Commissions to be used as they may direct.

It was further recommended that the $100,000 allotted to the U.S. Commission be used as follows: $30,000 to Lee's Collegiate Institute; $30,000 to Matthew T. Scott, Junior Academy; $5,000 to Sayre for improvements; and $35,000 to the Synodical Orphanage at Anchorage.[33]

The Commission's report to the U.S.Synod closed with these words:

> As Presbyterians, we have always stressed Christian Education, and one of our notable contributions in the upbuilding of the Republic has been our chain of Christian Colleges. Much as they were needed then, they are no less needed now. Then they battled against ignorance, now they must meet false conceptions of life, and non-Christian, if not anti-Christian propaganda and attitude. We must battle for truth and little weak poverty-stricken colleges are poor warriors. Our state institutions will grow stronger and stronger and Christian institutions will find it hard to meet the inducements offered by the institutions supported by public funds. Some think denominations must soon unite to meet the strain; how dull of mind we must be if we sense not the dangers, and unworthy if we seek not to meet them. It is Christian Statesmanship that moves us to unite as Presbyterians, U.S. and U.S.A., in a common effort to strengthen our educational institutions for the life of the church and the unfolding opportunities that are before us.[34]

It had been the hope of the Joint Commission that the Campaign might be begun by the first of the year (1922),

---

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

but they were unable to get it under way before the first of the summer and the intensive effort was not reached until the following fall.

The Campaign was launched under the auspices of the Executive Committee of Christian Education and Ministerial Relief of the U.S. Church, with Dr. S. W. McGill in charge. After much preparatory work, Dr. McGill and his staff of trained workers took the field for the campaign. Headquarters were established in Louisville, and the work was divided into four general departments: the city section, with the responsibility for promoting the city campaigns; the field section, with the responsibility for canvassing the smaller communities and churches; the publicity department; and the finance department. Gradually, under the influence of expert publicity and organization, the campaign began to gather momentum until it came into full swing in the fall. The work of the publicity department was especially effective. The churches were flooded with attractive literature concerning the work of the various schools, and the importance of the movement. A well-edited weekly called The Viewpoint was widely circulated with up-to-the-minute information concerning the campaign throughout the state, and with intimate sketches of individuals and churches and their happenings. Letters were constantly sent to the pastors and leaders, stirring them

up to interest and activity, and the newspapers cooperated both in their news columns and editorials.

The city campaigns began the last of August and continued through the twentieth of November. Cities in which campaigns were launched were Jackson, Paris, Henderson, Paducah, Owensboro, Covington, Frankfort, Lexington, Bowling Green, Harrodsburg, Danville, Ashland and Louisville. About three weeks was given to the campaign in each of these cities, with two weeks used for preparatory work and the final week used for intensive canvassing. During the preparatory period, a Blue Hue Dinner would be held for the church officers and their wives. Here some of the outstanding leaders in the state would come and speak in behalf of the movement. Soon after this, the organization of the local workers would be completed. They were organized in the churches along the lines of a college set-up, with the Chairman in each church called the "Dean", his first assistants "Professors" and the canvassers "Students." The Sunday preceding the canvass was known as "Christian Education Day", when visiting ministers occupied the different pulpits. Special programs were held in the Sunday Schools by the young people, and the entire day was devoted to the presentation of the Cause. Following this, the workers were given their final instructions and the week of intensive work was

begun, in which every member was seen and was given an opportunity to subscribe. During this period, reports were made daily by the workers, regarding the progress they had made. If the canvassing period included a Sunday, the churches would unite in a mass meeting that night, to add further impetus to the drive. On the final night a Victory Meeting would be held to hear the complete report, and to rejoice and give thanks for a successful effort.[35]

From the very first, this method of campaigning proved highly successful, and the reports of cities "going over the top" added daily momentum to the effort. Paris, with a goal of $25,000, subscribed $26,000; Henderson, having been asked for $30,000, gave $35,000; and Paducah, having been asked for $30,000 gave $31,000. Later on in the campaign, Lexington oversubscribed her $70,000 goal by giving $75,350, and Danville her $175,000 goal by subscribing $184,000. The campaign came to its close in the Louisville effort where $300,000 had been set as a goal. With interest worked up to a high pitch, the Louisville quota was oversubscribed by more than $27,000. When the campaign was finally completed in December, the last issue

---

[35]Cf. The Presbyterian Viewpoint, August 4, 1922. In Files of H.H. Sweets, 410 Urban Building, Louisville, Kentucky.

of The Viewpoint reported that the total subscriptions amounted to $1,126,431,05.[36]

Writing concerning the conclusion of the campaign, Dr. S. W. McGill, the Director, has related the following incident in regard to the five cents in the total:

> . . . I took that nickel, had it gilded and engraved, and presented it to your father. He wore it as a watch charm. You may have seen it. Maybe your mother still has it. When the janitor at the First Church, Louisville, saw this gold nickel he asked about it. Your Dad said, "That's what they gave me for raising $1,000,000 for Christian Education in Kentucky." The janitor said, "They shore ain't give you much." Kentucky Presbyterians could never pay your father for what he did for them.[37]

The subscriptions were made payable over a three year period. After the campaign, an office was maintained in Louisville for the collection of the pledges, and in the course of the three years, the collections amounted to $985,000. After paying the cost of the campaign and the cost of collections, the institutions netted about seventy-five per cent of the million dollars.[38]

Other work. During his Louisville ministry, Gil-

---

[36] Cf. The Presbyterian Viewpoint, December 22, 1922. In Files of H. H. Sweets, 410 Urban Building, Louisville, Kentucky.

[37] Letter of S. W. McGill to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., March 22, 1938. In Personal Files, S-6.

[38] Letter of J. C. Norton to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., May 2, 1938. In Personal Files, S-54.

lespie was closely connected with the work of the Louisville Seminary. In an open letter to prospective students, the President of the Seminary was setting forth the advantages students would find in the churches of Louisville. Speaking of Gillespie's church, he said:

> Six blocks south of the Seminary is the First Presbyterian Church (Southern). Its pastor is a typical Southern gentleman, a South Carolinian, Dr. R. T. Gillespie, also still a comparatively young man. He is a born pastor and organizer and often takes our Seminary students with him in his pastoral calls to show them in actual practice how to deal with individual men and women and to shepherd the flock. Our students have learned also most invaluable lessons from him in the organization of the different departments of a church for service.[39]

One of the services which Gillespie rendered the Seminary was the teaching of a course on Church Efficiency in the fall of 1922.[40] The lectures deal with the following subjects: The Pastor and his people; the Value of an Organized School; the Sunday School as an Evangelizing Agency; Strangers and how to meet them; Evangelism; Preparation for the Revival; Personal Work; the Pastor and his Officers; the Work of the Woman's Auxiliary (two lectures); and the Presbyterian Progressive Program (two lectures),

---

[39] "Some Unique Features of the Louisville Theological Seminary", Addressed to Intending Ministerial Students of our Presbyterian Colleges by John M. Vander Meulen, President. In Files of H. H. Sweets, 410 Urban Building, Louisville, Kentucky.

[40] Cf. Notes on "Church Efficiency", In Personal Files.

which included the planning and execution of the financial program of the church. The following examination questions give an idea of the way in which the subjects were treated.

I. (1) Definition of an organized Sunday School.
(2) What advantages are secured through an organized Sunday School?

II. How would you plan to reach with the Gospel the unsaved strangers to the church who are in your field?

III. What general preparation would you make for a revival in your church?

IV. What are the eight (now five) objectives of the Presbyterian Progressive Program? Under what departments are they grouped?

V. How would you prepare for an every member canvass in your church?

A year later, one of the men he had taught wrote him as follows:

> I want to take this means of thanking you for all that you did for me while I was in Louisville. I feel that it was a real inspiration to have known you and been associated with you. I count the lecture course you gave at the Seminary one of the most helpful I had while I was in school. But most of all, I count the conversations we had together and the advice you gave me as the most valuable. I shall always remember what you told me and prize it. Advice is always easily given, but not so easy to receive. But I intend to use what you gave me. And so I want to thank you in this little way.[41]

---

[41]Letter of Jim McLean to R.T.G., June 5, 1923. In Personal Files, S-45.

During his Louisville ministry, Gillespie served on two General Assembly's Committees. In 1923, he was appointed to the Permanent Committee on Men's Work in the Assembly, and during that year and the next, he took part in the selection of an Executive Secretary for the work and in setting up the program of the Men-of-the-Church.[42]

From 1922 through 1924, he served as a member of the Executive Committee on Christian Education and Ministerial Relief of the Assembly. Concerning his work on this Committee, Dr. Henry H. Sweets, the Executive Secretary has said:

> . . . Dr. Gillespie was not only prompt and faithful in his attendance to the meetings, but he was always constructive in his suggestions and very helpful in his counsel. Every member of the Committee felt under obligation to him not only for his thoughtful advice but for the fine spirit he always revealed. . . . He was especially interested in the candidates for the ministry and our educational institutions. He rendered valuable service as a member of several of the sub-committees.[43]

In 1923, Gillespie was President of the Presbyterian and Reformed Minister's Circle. There is the record in his files of a plan worked out between the Presbyterian Churches and the students of the seminary, by which the students vol-

---

[42]Cf. Letters In Personal Files, S-46, S-47, S-48, S-49, S-50.

[43]Letter of Henry H. Sweets to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., April 23, 1938, In Personal Files, S-4.

unteered their services to the ministers and churches of the community, for which they were to receive only the cost of their transportation and other necessary expenses. During the year, the Minister's Circle raised something over $200 for carrying on this work.[44]

The following year he was made President of the Ministerial Association, an interdenominational organization of all the ministers in the city. Upon his leaving Louisville to become President of Columbia Seminary, the following Resolution was adopted:

> Your Committee, speaking for every man in the Association, begs leave to speak for each and all not only appreciation but genuine affection. Dr. Gillespie has presided over our Ministerial body with dignity and distinction; he is a man of most gracious spirit and has in all good conscience performed the duties of his office. The position came to him unsolicited and was conferred as a compliment to his ability and capacity for leadership. He has not disappointed us.[45]

When Gillespie returned to South Carolina, he decided to place his membership in his old Presbytery of Pee Dee, but his duties at the Seminary were such that he was unable to enter into its active work. Upon his death, a memorial was read in the Presbytery, a portion of which is as follows:

. . . those who knew Dr. Gillespie and loved him best,

---

[44]Cf. Letters In Personal Files, S-51, S-52.

[45]Cf. Resolution In Personal Files, T-33.

like to think of the graces and qualities of the man which made it possible for him to achieve distinction and fill so large a place in the love and confidence of his fellow men. . . . Dr. Gillespie will be greatly missed by Pee Dee Presbytery and the Synod of South Carolina. We shall miss his genial smile, his firm hand-clasp, his kind, sympathetic interest and his wholesome counsel. He served his generation by the will of God and "fell on sleep" like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams.[46]

---

[46] Minutes of Pee Dee Presbytery, 1931, pp. 9, 11, 12. In Personal Files, S-53.

CHAPTER VII

HIS WORK AS PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

I. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE SEMINARY

Beginnings of the Seminary. Columbia Theological Seminary had its beginning in December 1828, in Lexington, Oglethorpe County, Georgia. Dr. Thomas Goulding, pastor of the Lexington church, had been chosen the first Professor by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, and he taught the first class of five students in his home in Lexington, pending the decision as to where the Seminary should be located. The first name given the Seminary was "The Theological Seminary of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia." It was finally decided to locate the Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, and early in 1830, Dr. Goulding and his few students moved to Columbia where for a while they occupied the manse of the Presbyterian Church.[1] A little later, the property which the Seminary was to occupy for the next ninety-six years was purchased for the new school. The main building had been a colonial dwelling and is still standing on the old campus. The two dormitories known as Simons and Law Halls were built

---

[1] "Columbia Theological Seminary", Article by Richard T. Gillespie, In Personal Files, T-1.

in the decade of 1850.[2] A building which had originally served as a stable was later converted into the chapel, and was used as such during the Seminary's life in Columbia. It was in this chapel that Woodrow Wilson made his profession of faith when seventeen years of age.[3] His father was a professor in the Seminary at the time. This chapel marked the place of the founding of Winthrop College, and since the removal of the Seminary from Columbia, the chapel has been moved to the Winthrop College Campus, Rock Hill, South Carolina.[4]

In 1831, Dr. George Howe, a New England minister who was visiting in the South for his health, was elected Professor of Biblical Literature. Dr. Howe refused many opportunities to leave, and remained with the Seminary for a long service of fifty-two years. Two years later, Dr. Aaron W. Leland, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Charleston, South Carolina, was elected Professor of Christian Theology. Dr. Leland was also a New Englander, having come from Massachusetts, and he served the Seminary for

---

[2] W. C. Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church 1831-1931, (Decatur, Georgia: Dennis Lindsay Printing Company, Inc., 1931) p. 14.

[3] Louis C. LaMotte, Colored Light, (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1937, p. 149.

[4] Ibid. pp. 201-202.

twenty-three years. Thus it can be seen that in its early years, Columbia Seminary came strongly under the influence of New England Puritanism.[5]

Connection with Old School Assembly. In 1838, there was a split in the Presbyterian Church, between those who stood for greater freedom of doctrine and independence of government and those who adhered to the traditional Presbyterian theology and polity. The former were influenced by New England Congregationalism and formed the New School Assembly, while the latter formed the Old School. In some quarters, doubts were raised at this time concerning the soundness of the Seminary, because of her New England professors, but an investigation by the Board proved that Howe and Leland were both firm in the faith and conscientiously adhered to the Standards of the Church. Thus from the outset, Columbia was identified with the conservative wing of the church, and until the formation of the Southern Church in 1861 was affiliated with the Old School Assembly.[6]

It has been claimed that during the years of increasing tension between the North and the South, Columbia

---

[5] W. C. Robinson, Op. Cit. pp. 16-19.

[6] Ibid. p. 21.

Seminary played an important part in delaying the break in the Old School Presbyterian Church. The Methodists had divided as early as 1844, and the Baptists in 1845, but the Presbyterian church held together until 1861. One reason for Columbia's part in this was the fact that the Synod was engaged in more firmly establishing and preserving the young school of prophets. "When a Synod is deeply concerned and anxious about a fondling institution, that fact acts as a deterrent to controversy and schism."[7] Another was the irenic temperament of the early professors. A third was the influence of James Henley Thornwell, who became a member of the Columbia Board in 1838 and a professor in 1852. Dr. Thornwell was a dominating personality, not only throughout the South during these years, but throughout the whole Old School Assembly. He was a strong Union man, and in 1851 he wrote in the Southern Presbyterian Review, "God grant that our country may be saved - that the North and the South may be brought to meet in harmony and peace upon the common ground of our glorious Constitution."[8] In all of the church courts of this period, Dr. Thornwell and the other Columbia men helped keep peace

---

[7] Ibid. p. 34.

[8] Ibid. p. 42.

in the church by their insistence on the spirituality of the church, and by their refusal to sanction the discussion of any political or social issues on the floor of the Assemblies. They were better able to do this because the strongest abolitionists were identified with the New School group, which had already withdrawn. However, all their prayers and all their efforts were unavailing to prevent the break, and when the Old School Assembly of 1861 insisted on bringing the question of slavery on the floor of the court, and passed a resolution condemning the holders of slaves, the Southern commissioners withdrew.[9]

The founding of the Southern Presbyterian Church. When the break finally came, Columbia men were found among the leaders in the new Assembly which met at Augusta to form the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. B. M. Palmer, a graduate and former member of the faculty, preached the opening sermon and was chosen the first Moderator; Thornwell made the motion by which the new-born church received her name, and it was seconded by Leland, the Professor. Thornwell likewise drew up The Address to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout

---

[9]Ibid. pp. 33-46.

the World", setting forth the reasons for withdrawal, and took a large part in drawing up the Book of Church Order under which the courts of the church were to operate. Other leading Columbia men at the first Assembly were: Joseph R. Wilson, father of Woodrow and later Professor in the Seminary, who was chosen permanent clerk; Charles Colcock Jones, a former professor in the Seminary and a successful preacher to the negroes, who was made chairman of the Committee on Home Missions; and John Leighton Wilson, a member of the first graduating class and former missionary to Africa, who was made secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions. Of the fifty-two ministerial commissioners to the Assembly, thirteen were alumni or honorary alumni of Columbia, six were alumni of Union Seminary in Virginia, and the remainder were not Seminary graduates, or were alumni of institutions outside the bounds of the Southern church.[10]

In the War years and the years which followed, the Seminary suffered the plight of all other institutions in the South. Reduced in men and resources, she was barely able to exist. Finally, in 1880, because of vacancies in the faculty, a decreasing number of students, and insuf-

---

[10] Ibid. pp. 46-54.

ficient income, the Board ordered that the Seminary be closed. Its sessions were suspended from the spring of 1880 until the fall of 1882, when a movement among the alumni, of whom Palmer was a leader, resulted in the raising of sufficient funds to reopen.[11]

Theological controversy. Another unforseen period of difficulty was just ahead, however, in the theological dissention which was soon to arise over the teaching of evolution in the Seminary. Dr. James Woodrow, who had been Professor of Natural Science in Connection with Revelation since 1861, had received his earlier training in Heidelberg. There he had come under the influence of Darwinism and had made the acquaintance of the leading men of science of that day. In his work at the Seminary, he sought to harmonize what he conceived as the supposed antagonisms between science and revelation. Holding to the Orthodox view of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, he also held that the possibility of "mediate creation" was not a contradiction to Scripture. His theory of "mediate creation" allowed for the evolution of man's body through succeeding generations, but required the direct creation of moral man (i.e. man's soul) by a special act of God. These views he

---

[11] L. C. LaMotte, Op. Cit., pp. 147-148.

presented in an address to the alumni in the spring of 1884. A storm of opposition arose against him as holding views contrary to the Standards of the church, and he was asked to resign. He refused, and under the leadership of John L. Giradeau, a fellow member of the faculty, a movement was begun to have him removed. The controversy dragged on in the courts of the church for two years, in the meanwhile doing great harm to the Seminary. Finally Woodrow was removed in 1886, but so severe had been the effect of the controversy on the Seminary that it was unable to operate at all during the term 1886-1887. Dr. Woodrow's position was later vindicated as not being inconsistent with the Bible, and some of his successors on the faculty have even held to his views.[12]

Later years. After its reopening in 1887, the Seminary began a period of labor which was comparatively calm compared to the period which had preceded. During these years, however, the Seminary was never able to attract a very large attendance and the financial resources of the institution were always severely limited. However, under the leadership of Dr. W. M. McPheeters and other faithful professors, the Seminary continued a stronghold

---

[12] W. C. Robinson, Op. Cit., pp. 168-187.

of orthodoxy and served in good measure the needs of the Presbyterian Church in the deep south. With the turn of the century, it became more and more evident that for the Seminary to more effectively serve her constituency, some means must be found for enlarging her resources. Through the years, an excellent theological library had been accumulated but it was largely inaccessible to the students, and the equipment and income of the Seminary were badly in need of improvement.

II. THE REMOVAL TO ATLANTA

Earlier efforts at removal. As early as 1887, the suggestion had been made that the Seminary be removed to Atlanta, but the Synod of South Carolina had taken action against it. In 1890, an effort was made to arouse sentiment for establishing a University by the Synods of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, in which the Seminary would have probably been involved, but nothing came of the project. In 1895, a committee was appointed by the South Carolina Synod to confer with a similar committee from the Synod of Georgia, concerning a proposal to relocate the Seminary and to combine it with the theological department of Southwestern, but the conference was never held. In 1901, a motion made by Dr. James Woodrow that the Seminary not be moved from Columbia had unani-

mously carried in the Synod of South Carolina. In 1903, however, the matter of union with the theological department of Southwestern and relocation in Atlanta was again broached, and in 1904 the Synod of South Carolina voted 96 to 52 for the plan. Again the plan failed to materialize and no further efforts were made for the time to move the Seminary.[13] In 1910, the office of President was created. Dr. Thornton Whaling was chosen the first President, and under his administration (1911-1921) the Seminary made good progress.[14]

In 1922, however, continued deficits made it apparent that some steps would have to be taken to increase the resources of the Seminary. The Synod of South Carolina took action in 1923, recommending to the controlling Synods that the Board be empowered to survey the field, and either to relocate the Seminary in Atlanta or to accept an invitation from Union Seminary in Virginia for a merger in Richmond. In consequence of this, the Board decided not to merge with Union, but to press for the removal to Atlanta. Dr. J. M. Wells, who had succeeded Dr.

---

[13] L. C. LaMotte, Op. Cit. pp. 190-191. Quoting F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, Editors, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850, pp. 233, 235, 236, 285, 426.

[14] L. C. LaMotte, Op. Cit. pp. 191-192.

Whaling as President, and who had favored the merger with Union, offered his resignation in the spring of 1924.[15] Upon the resignation of Dr. Wells, Dr. R. C. Reed, who had been Professor of Ecclesiastical History since 1898, was chosen to serve as Acting President until a successor could be found. Throughout the years, Dr. Reed had been one of the leaders in the movement for relocation and had long looked forward to the day when it could be accomplished.[16]

First call to Gillespie. The nominating Committee from the Board of Directors approached Gillespie in the spring of 1924 and asked permission to submit his name to the Board for the Presidency. At that time, the matter of the Seminary's future location had not been definitely settled. In a memorial address, Dr. McPheeters tells how Gillespie came to Columbia on this occasion and talked the whole matter over with the faculty. While he was deeply interested in the Seminary, Dr. McPheeters says that he refused to even consider the call until this matter was settled in one way or the other. It was Gillespie's opinion

---

[15] Ibid. p. 225.

[16] Cf. Campaign Bulletin on Columbia Theological Seminary, p. 19. In Personal Files, T-2.

that the new president should have no part in this decision but that it was one which should be made by the Board of Directors and the controlling Synods. After the future policy of the Seminary had been agreed upon, a new President could then be called to carry it out. This was as far as he would go at the time. He would not promise to reconsider later, nor would he even express an opinion as to the course he thought the Board and Synods ought to take in the matter of removal. "Much as the faculty and Board regretted this decision", Dr. McPheeters says, "they saw the wisdom of it and also saw in it an indication that they had not made a mistake in calling Dr. Gillespie to be the head of the Seminary."[17]

Action of the Board and Controlling Synods. This attitude on the part of Gillespie seems to have been what was needed to precipitate definite action on the part of the Board and Synods. Soon after this, the Board passed the following resolution which marks the first definite action that was taken,

> Because of its geographical position in the controlling Synods and Church, its large and growing membership, its strategic location as to the controlling

---

[17] W. M. McPheeters, "Dr. Gillespie, the Student and Man." Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:15, November, 1930.

> Synods and the Gulf Synods as well, the city of Atlanta be and is now chosen as the future home of the Seminary, provided the Presbytery of Atlanta assume the burden of providing the Seminary a suitable site and buildings in keeping with its dignity, and ample enough to care for its anticipated growth, with the right granted to use the proceeds arising from the sale of its present plant for this purpose if required, and provided further that although the Board now has the authority to locate the Seminary wherever in its judgment it may best serve the church, this action shall not become binding until it is approved by the Synods at their next meeting.[18]

With this action of the Board before them, the church leaders of Georgia, and especially of the Atlanta area, who had been anxious for some time for the removal, began to take steps to secure official approval of the church courts and to make plans for the raising of the necessary funds. Some of the Georgia leaders in this move were: Dr. J. Sprole Lyons, pastor of the First Church, Atlanta, Dr. Benjamin R. Lacy, Central Church, Atlanta, Dr. Richard Orme Flinn, North Avenue Church, Atlanta, Dr. D. P. McGeachy, Decatur, Dr. E. L. Hill, Athens, Dr. Neil R. Anderson, Savannah, Mr. J. Bulow Campbell, a layman of Atlanta and Mr. J. T. Brantley, a layman from Blackshear, Georgia. Dr. Lyons was Chairman of the Synod's Executive Committee of Education, and Dr. Brantley had for many years been President of the Board of Directors.

While Gillespie was officially out of the picture

---

[18]Cf. Resolution, In Personal File, T-4.

at the time, Dr. Brantley kept him posted as to each step of progress which was made in the removal plans. In one letter he writes that early in October (1924) he had attended a conference in Atlanta between the removal committee of Atlanta Presbytery, the Synod's Committee on work, and the Synod's Committee on Christian Education. The conference was held, he says, to reach some mutual understanding about the Seminary's situation, and that after a long discussion, it was decided to recommend to the Synod that a campaign be put on early in 1925 for $500,000 for the removal of the Seminary. Of this amount, Atlanta Presbytery was to raise one half, and in addition, to provide a suitable site. The other half was to be raised by the Synod of Georgia. In the same letter, he tells of the response to the proposal when it was taken up at the meeting of Synod in Valdosta a few days later.

> . . . The spirit shown by the Synod when the matter was up was very fine and Dr. Lyons' talk most impressive. Dr. Lacy made one of the best addresses I have ever heard and Dr. Flinn was not lacking in his warm cordial interest. There was, of course, some objection to the matter, arising mainly from the belief that the campaign would not be a success due to the peculiar financial condition of the entire state. After the matter had been discussed from every angle and those who opposed the removal had been given an opportunity to state their reasons the matter came to vote. About three or four voted against it and one of these moved to make it unanimous. The older members of Synod state that it was the most impressive Synod they had ever attended and for this spirit the

affairs of the Seminary are largely responsible.[19]

Representatives were appointed at this meeting to visit the other controlling Synods, and to report to them the action of Atlanta Presbytery and the Synod of Georgia in offering to raise a half million dollars for the removal of the Seminary, and to invite the other Synods to vote their approval. The controlling Synods at this time were South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama (divided with Louisville.) Later that fall, Mississippi voted to become a controlling Synod and elected directors to the Board. On October 17th, Dr. Brantley wrote Gillespie that the Alabama and Florida Synods had voted unanimously for the plan, and that the motion of approval had prevailed in the South Carolina Synod by a vote of ninety-seven to thirty-five. He stated that the way now seemed clear so far as the Synods were concerned, and that it was his purpose to call a meeting of the Board in the near future in order to extend him another call.[20]

Second call to Gillespie. This meeting was held in Atlanta on November 25th and Gillespie was notified by

---

[19]Letter of J. T. Brantley to R.T.G., October 13, 1924, In Personal Files, T-5.

[20]Letter of J. T. Brantley to R.T.G., October 17, 1924, In Personal Files, T-11.

long distance call that he had been unanimously elected President of the Seminary, and that a member of the Board would come out to Louisville to discuss the matter with him. The writer well remembers the excitement which prevailed in the household that night, as the family took counsel together on what should be done.

There are numerous letters in Gillespie's files from friends, assuring him of their interest and prayers during his period of decision and expressing the hope that he would be led to accept. Dr. Brantley wrote him the following day, officially notifying him of the Board's action and saying,

> This action of the Board follows upon your refusal to allow the nominating committee of the Board to present your name. It attests not only the very high regard in which you are held here by the members of the Board, but their sincere deep-seated belief that you are the man of all others best fitted to take charge of the affairs of the Seminary . . . It is our prayer that you may be given the same divine guidance which we believe has been ours, and that you may be led to believe that your solemn duty lies with the Seminary.[21]

In reply Gillespie wrote,

> I cannot express to you in words my sincere appreciation of the honor which has been conferred upon me, and the confidence expressed by the Board in its willingness to trust me with leadership of the forces now working to rebuild Columbia Seminary in

---

[21]Letter of J. T. Brantley to R.T.G., November 27, 1924. In Personal Files, T-6.

> Atlanta. I know you appreciate the sense of responsibility which comes to me in facing this question. I shall try to decide in the light of my duty to the Kingdom as a whole . . .[22]

He added that he would not attempt to reach a decision until he had talked with the Board member who was commissioned to visit him and until he had taken the matter up with the officers of his church. He promised to give his answer as soon as possible.

On Sunday, December 7th, Gillespie announced to his congregation that he had decided to accept the call which had been offered him and take up the duties as President of the Seminary. He also gave the announcement to the press and wired the Board and Faculty of his decision. Immediately he began to receive messages of reassurance from all sides, and his replies show that he was very happy in his decision and was now anxious to get into the new work.[23]

In answering a telegram which he had received from the Student Body of the Seminary, Gillespie said,

> I have accepted the call because I believe it to be clearly evident God wants me to serve in this capacity. I realize that there is much to be done,

---

[22]Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, November 28, 1924. In Personal Files, T-7.

[23]Cf. Letters In Personal Files, T-12, T-13, T-14, T-15, T-16, T-17, T-18, T-19, T-20.

> that the task is a many-sided one, and that all the energy and strength which can be commanded will be required to accomplish the work which lies before us. But I have faith in the possibilities of large usefulness by the Seminary and I believe that its success in the future can be secured if all will join to bring it about.[24]

The committee on removal was making plans for a campaign in Atlanta early in the year, so it was important that Gillespie begin his new duties as soon as possible. It was impossible for him to move the family until the first of February, the close of the children's school term, but he offered to hold himself subject to call any time after the first of the year.

On December 31st, he met in Atlanta with the Committee appointed by the Board for the selection of a site. Several sites were offered in and around Atlanta, and after careful consideration, it was decided to accept a site offered by the G. B. Scott Estate on the southeast border of Decatur. This was a beautiful wooded piece of rolling land of about twenty-five acres, on the outskirts of town. The amount was later increased by other gifts to fifty-seven acres, and the City of Decatur agreed to improve the property with water and sewerage and paving without expense to the Seminary.[25]

---

[24]Letter of R.T.G. to Student Body, Columbia Theological Seminary, December 9, 1924, In Personal Files, T-21.

[25]Cf. Minutes In Personal Files, T-8.

During the second week in January, Gillespie made a brief trip to Columbia to discuss the work with members of the faculty, but he returned for the following Sunday and continued to fill his pulpit through the last Sunday in January. The family decided not to set up a home immediately but to make temporary arrangements until it was decided whether to move to Columbia first, or whether to move direct to Decatur. Later it was decided that the family should spend the summer in the mountains, and the following fall should set up their new home in Decatur.

The financial campaigns. The first task facing Gillespie in his new work was the Campaign for a quarter million dollars in Atlanta. The same staff and methods which had been used successfully in the Kentucky Campaign were to be used in Atlanta. It was also to be directed by Dr. S. W. McGill. He and Gillespie had become intimate friends and McGill wrote him shortly before the Campaign started, "I have told Mrs. McGill that I am going to do the best I can for the Seminary because it is your Seminary."[26]

---

[26]Letter of S. W. McGill to R.T.G., January 16, 1925, In Seminary Files, T-22.

While it was necessary in these campaigns to use high pressure and propaganda, yet McGill and Gillespie always sought to give the campaigns a spiritual undergirding. McGill has said concerning this, "The work at headquarters was begun each day with a prayer conference. The workers in the field began each day with a prayer service. The whole program was prayed through.[27] Gillespie, in writing to one of the secretaries who had worked with them in Atlanta and was now being transferred to another campaign, said,

> I hope you will learn to look on your work as different from that of the ordinary commercial position. In this field, you have part in the great movement which stirs the church, not only in our own denomination, but of all faiths, in the interest of safe sound religious training for our young people. My hope is that you may be happy and that you may find a deep satisfaction in your work.[28]

The dates set for the Atlanta Campaign were February 1-17. All the churches of the Atlanta area were organized along the lines of a Seminary set-up, with the canvassers designated as "Deans", "Professors" and "Students". February 1st was designated "Opportunity Sunday" when the matter was presented simultaneously from all the

---

[27]S. W. McGill, "The Story of Greater Columbia Seminary Campaign", In Seminary Files, E-53.

[28]Letter of R.T.G. to Martha Steel, January 25, 1926. In Personal Files, T-9.

pulpits. The following Tuesday evening, a Blue Hue Dinner was held for all the officers of the city and their wives. The next Sunday (February 8th) was "Christian Education Sunday" with another presentation in all the churches. Another dinner was held on Tuesday, the 10th, for giving final instructions to the workers. The following week was given to the actual work of canvassing, with report luncheons held each day. Sunday, the 14th, was "Parley Sunday" with a mass meeting of all the Presbyterians in the city. Wednesday, February 17th, was set as the day for the Victory Celebration.[29] Writing concerning this, Dr. S. W. McGill, the director of the campaign, has said,

> The closing Victory Celebration was an event long to be remembered in Atlanta among Presbyterians. When all reports were in it was discovered that subscriptions had been received totalling $304,000. The amount was later increased to $312,000. Dr. J. Sprole Lyons presided at the Victory meeting. Addresses were made by President R. T. Gillespie, Dr. Henry H. Sweets, Dr. Benjamin R. Lacy and Dr. Lyons. This celebration was one of the most enthusiastic gatherings of Presbyterians ever held in Atlanta.[30]

It had been agreed beforehand that the money raised in Atlanta would go for the buildings and the money in the Synod for endowment. It was also agreed that Atlanta's

---

[29] Letter of S. W. McGill to R.T.G., January 7, 1925, In Personal Files, T-9.

[30] S. W. McGill, "The Story of Greater Columbia Seminary Campaign." Loc. Cit.

over-subscription of her quota would not apply to the Synod's quota. Therefore headquarters were established in Atlanta for the Synod's Campaign and work was begun throughout the state for the raising of another quarter million dollars. Dr. McGill and his staff likewise conducted this campaign.

In recounting the story of this, Dr. McGill has told how they experienced many hectic days in conducting the Synod's Campaign. It was difficult to secure a schedule in the churches so as to keep the entire staff occupied, and this caused the time of the campaign to be extended and added to its expense. Finally, however, Synod's Committee set December 17th as the closing date of the Campaign. The field had practically been covered and there was still a shortage of $57,000 which had to be secured to make good in Georgia. Sunday, December 13th, was observed as "Presbyterian Educational Emergency Sunday" in the churches throughout Georgia. "These were trying days," Dr. McGill relates. "The Campaign Committee could not see its way out but this was not necessary. The movement was of God and was bound to succeed." In the course of the next few days, the balance needed had been reduced to less than thirty thousand dollars. Two days before the time set for the closing of the campaign, four

subscriptions of $2500 each were received and another gift of $10,000, while other subscriptions for smaller amounts were coming in by every mail and by telegraph.

> When all reports were tabulated it was found that the total amount subscribed was $624,751,72 including the site valued at $40,000. When this result was announced, the committee paused and was led in a fervent prayer of Thanksgiving to God by Dr. M. L. Anderson. It was then in order to have words of felicitation to the Chairman, Dr. Lyons, for his splendid work, to President R. T. Gillespie who had had so much to do with guiding the campaign to a successful completion and to the members of the Staff who were present and were presented to the committee.[31]

At the close of the campaign, Dr. Lyons, the Chairman of the Synod's Committee, is quoted as saying, 'In addition to getting the money for Columbia Seminary, Presbyterianism is fifty per cent stronger in the Synod than it was when the campaign started and every problem of our Church in Georgia will be easier."[32]

The pledges were made payable over a period of eighteen months, and the collections in the Atlanta Campaign amounted to slightly more than 90%, but in the Georgia Campaign only about 75% was paid. Deducting the shrinkage and the cost of the campaigns the Seminary netted around $400,000 for her new program.[33]

---

[31] S. W. McGill, "The Story of Greater Columbia Seminary Campaign," Loc. Cit.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Letter of Virginia Harrison to Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., May 3, 1938. In Personal Files, T-10.

Two years of transition. During the years 1925-1927, while the money was being collected and the buildings constructed in Decatur, the Seminary continued her work in Columbia. Gillespie had established his home in Decatur, but he maintained offices in both Atlanta and Columbia. During this period, he divided his time between the two offices and also spent much time on the road. These were strenuous years for him. Writing to one of his kinsmen about this time, he said,

> I am off tonight for a trip through Tennessee. It seems that I have not time to rest and very little to be with my family. There is so much of importance to be looked after these days that I am kept on the go all the time, but I hope this rush season will be over before long.[34]

In the Atlanta office, Gillespie took charge of the collection of pledges for the campaigns. It had been originally planned to employ someone else to take charge of the collections, but in order to save expense, he volunteered to take charge of this work himself. He secured the efficient help of Miss Virginia Harrison, as secretary, and trained her in the methods which had been used in the collection of the Kentucky campaign. He was able, eventually, to turn the matter entirely over to her, and her excellent

---

[34] Letter of R.T.G. to W. R. Sims, April 6, 1925, In Seminary Files, E-21.

record in collections led to her retention as Burser after the Seminary was moved.

Another responsibility in Atlanta during the years of transition was the supervision of the building program. Soon after coming to the Seminary, Gillespie made a trip to several of the theological schools of the East, in order to secure the latest suggestions for his new plant. An English Gothic form of architecture in red brick with stone tracing was agreed upon, and Gillespie gave close attention to every detail of the planning. The original plans included the building of an administration building, a dormitory, a refectory and a library. After careful planning, however, it was decided to economize by arranging the refectory, for the time being, in the basement of the Administration Building, and by making a place for the library on the second floor of that building. Both of these were to be semi-permanent arrengements, though to give a permanent effect, so that if the time ever came for increasing the size of the plant, the library could be converted into class rooms which would harmonize with the other class rooms on the same floor. On this floor the chapel was also located. The south end of this building was left unfinished, in order that some day a Gothic tower could be added. The building was named Campbell Hall, in memory of Virginia Orme Campbell, the mother of

record in collections led to her retention as Bursar after the Seminary was moved.

Another responsibility in Atlanta during the years of transition was the supervision of the building program. Soon after coming to the Seminary, Gillespie made a trip to several of the theological schools of the East, in order to secure the latest suggestions for his new plant. An English Gothic form of architecture in red brick with stone tracing was agreed upon, and Gillespie gave close attention to every detail of the planning. The original plans included the building of an administration building, a dormitory, a refectory and a library. After careful planning, however, it was decided to economize by arranging the refectory, for the time being, in the basement of the Administration Building, and by making a place for the library on the second floor of that building. Both of these were to be semi-permanent arrangements, though to give a permanent effect, so that if the time ever came for increasing the size of the plant, the library could be converted into class rooms which would harmonize with the other class rooms on the same floor. On this floor the chapel was also located. The south end of this building was left unfinished, in order that some day a Gothic tower could be added. The building was named Campbell Hall, in memory of Virginia Orme Campbell, the mother of

Mr. J. Bulow Campbell of Atlanta, the largest single benefactor of the Seminary. Gillespie looked forward to the day when the Seminary would have two hundred students, and in all of his planning and building, he planned so that the additions could be made with a minimum of expense and change. Because of these economies, he was able to secure the best in construction and material for the money available and still allow for future enlargement.

The dormitory was also constructed along English lines, with four sections which were non-connecting. The purpose was to eliminate the long noisy halls found in some dormitories. One section was arranged for married students; another section was equipped as apartments for two Professors' families; and the other sections were named Law and Simons Halls, after the dormitories on the old campus in Columbia. In addition to this, dormitory space was provided on the top floor of Campbell Hall. The building program also included the construction of four faculty homes, and Gillespie took a personal interest in securing the special features which each family desired. He himself took one of the apartments in the dormitory.

During these two years, Gillespie spent much time with the architects and the contractors, in order to see that the buildings were complete in every detail. He also took an active interest in landscaping the campus and this

later became his hobby when the Seminary had been moved. A landscape architect from the East laid out the original work, but because of limited funds, Gillespie later sought other means for carrying it on. He succeeded in arousing the interest of others in this, and secured gifts of plants and shrubs for the campus. Later he set apart a plot as a little nursery where he sought to grow shrubs for future use. The buildings and grounds were a source of great joy to him, and he always took pride in showing them to visitors.

Another feature of Gillespie's work during these two years was the promotion of the Seminary's new program before its constituency and before the church-at-large. The unsettled conditions at the Seminary for the past few years had put the Seminary in an unfavorable light and Gillespie realized the importance of overcoming this sentiment. He used the church papers for advertising and issued frequent bulletins in keeping his program before the church. For a while, he engaged the services of an advertising expert. In writing to a fellow minister about this he said, "You may feel that we can do this ourselves but it is a rather big task for a man without experience in such work. I am making a study of work of this kind, but for me it is very difficult."[35]

---

[35]Letter of R.T.G. to H. W. Pratt, July 13, 1926, In Seminary Files, C-2.

The unsettled conditions at the Seminary also had had the inevitable effect of turning away prospective students, and another task which Gillespie found was to build up the student body. The class entering in the fall of 1925 would compose the Centennial class of the Seminary and would be the first to graduate in Atlanta. Gillespie used this feature in appealing for students. By visiting all the colleges in his constituency, and by extensive advertising in the college publications, and by constant correspondence, he was able to enroll an excellent class of sixteen men. The next year he was even more successful and the entering class of thirty-six students was the largest in the history of the Seminary.

When Gillespie came to Columbia, he found the buildings on the old campus in a bad state of repair. Nothing had been spent on them for several years, and in spite of the fact that they would be used only two years longer, he set about to improve them throughout. It was his contention that it ought to be done for the sake of the property, but especially for the psychological effect it would have on the students and constituency during the years of transition. Writing concerning this at the time he said,

> On the campus conditions are most gratifying. The general condition has been much improved by the thoughtful expenditure of a comparatively small amount. This

> has reacted most favorably on the student body and all who are connected with the institution. The spirit of loyalty and enthusiasm among the students is fine.[36]

In order to take care of these expenses and other increased expenditures, Gillespie organized a Supporting League in which he sought to secure special contributions for a limited period in order to take care of these matters. Most of this work was done by correspondence from the Columbia office, and involved much detail. In describing the Supporting League to a prospective subscriber, Gillespie said,

> . . . I am seeking enlistments in a Supporting League, the object of which is to carry us through this transition period and bring us safely to our centennial . . . I am asking this of a great number of friends of the Board, Faculty, and Alumni, in the hope that by a wide distribution it will not prove a hardship to any.[37]

While the income from this effort was not sufficient to prevent a deficit, yet the Supporting League gifts proved a substantial help in carrying through this period.

In addition to all this, Gillespie was constantly on the road, appearing before church courts and preaching in the churches. In his first report to the Board in May 1925, Gillespie said, "Since the 1st of February I have

---

[36]Letter of R.T.G. to S. H. Edmunds, April 20, 1926, In Seminary Files, B-2.

[37]Letter of R.T.G. to Clara W. Taylor, June 10, 1925, In Seminary Files, BB-6.

been most of the time absent from Columbia. I have travelled many miles, and have spoken forty-five times, practically all in the interest of the Seminary or religious education."[38]

The last Commencement in Columbia was held in May 1927. The Board had chosen that occasion for Gillespie's inauguration into office, as a token of the union between the old Columbia and the new. Soon after this, Gillespie issued a Valedictory message to the Presbyterians of South Carolina, parts of which are as follows:

> When this bulletin reaches you we shall be in the midst of the removal of Columbia Seminary from our own State and Synod to the new location in Decatur, which is just outside the city of Atlanta.
>
> As we leave the old campus in Columbia, for the new location which has been provided in Atlanta, we go with emotions which cannot be described. Around Columbia Seminary, during the past century, there have gathered hallowed memories, sacred traditions and a historic background which have made this spot sacred to all Presbyterians in South Carolina . . .
>
> We are not, however, leaving South Carolina, nor are we leaving behind us the friends of other days whom we hold so dear . . . In Atlanta while across the border line of a State, we are in reality nearer to many sections of South Carolina than our fathers were . . .
>
> It is our earnest hope that the future may justify the wisdom of the removal of the Seminary to Atlanta, which is near the center of Columbia's territory, and is also the heart of southern life and activity . . .
>
> Columbia Seminary belongs to South Carolina and South Carolina to Columbia Seminary. It has been so for a century, it cannot be otherwise in the future . . . We ask your continued friendship and your prayers for wisdom and guidance in the work which is committed to our direction; and we ask your moral and financial

---

[38] President's Report in Board Minutes 1925, p. 23.

support of the new program with which Columbia proposes to meet the problems of a new day which is dawning in the southern states.[39]

During the following summer, the library and equipment in Columbia were packed and shipped to Decatur in preparation for the opening in the fall.

XII. GILLESPIE AND THE NEW COLUMBIA

Opening in Decatur. Columbia Seminary opened in Decatur, Georgia on Wednesday, September 14, 1927 at ten A. M. In a letter to Dr. Brantley, the President of the Board, who was prevented from attending because of illness, Gillespie has described the opening:

> We opened the Seminary on schedule with an interesting and inspiring service, and an audience which taxed the capacity of our Chapel. All necessary preparation was completed prior to the opening, and our students seem to be as comfortably settled after a week on the Campus, as was ever the case in Columbia. . .
>
> We have completed the construction of our buildings, but we are just beginning the building of a new life for the Seminary, and we are trying to build this new life on the sure foundation upon which the Seminary was established a century ago. I believe that in the future all who are interested in the Church, and in the coming of the Kingdom will be interested in the program which we are now developing to prepare a worthy and adequate ministry for the Southeast section of our Church.
>
> The building accomplishment of the past twelve months we look upon as only a demonstration of what can be done when a great people unite in an earnest effort to carry forward the work of the Kingdom, and we are all

---

[39] Letter of R.T.G. to the Presbyterians of South Carolina, In Seminary Files, E-51.

determined to continue to go forward, realizing that our task is so great that it can never be fully accomplished.[40]

Soon after the opening, one of Gillespie's friends who had been interested in all phases of the Seminary program, offered to provide him with a month's vacation at Clifton Springs, New York where he could find complete rest and relaxation. For three years he had carried the heavy load laid upon him with practically no vacation at all. In accepting this trip, Gillespie wrote,

> I cannot tell you how sincerely I appreciate your kind and generous impulse which alone makes it possible for me to have the rest and opportunity to recuperate. The only condition under which I am willing to accept such a gift as this is that I feel it to be imperative to bring myself into the best physical condition before undertaking an even more strenuous program for the next three or five years than that through which we have just passed. I feel confident that the future growth and development of the Seminary is already assured, but the realization of this possibility is conditioned upon hard work and a great deal of it. I am perfectly willing to do the work necessary and I feel sure, in advance of undertaking it that your contribution toward making me fit will return to the Seminary a hundred fold in the service which I shall be able to render.[41]

In the same letter he added that he felt now he could leave, for the finishing touches on the equipment and buildings had all been completed and the routine work of the institution was now well organized and was being

---

[40] Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, September 22, 1927, In Seminary Files, D-10.

[41] Letter of R.T.G. to Mrs. T. S. Bryan, October 14, 1927, In Seminary Files, D-7.

carried on with thoroughness and efficiency. Concerning the spirit on the campus he added,

> The students seem to be happy with their life on the campus, and it is general opinion among the older students and the faculty that the men are doing their work more faithfully and more willingly than at any time in the past.[42]

The Centennial Year. The first year on the new campus was the Centennial year of the Seminary. Ever since coming to the Seminary, Gillespie had been looking toward this event and was planning to make much of it. As early as 1925 a Centennial Committee had been appointed to prepare for this occasion, and the original purpose had been to use it for the launching of a Centennial Fund of a million dollars for the endowment of the Seminary.

Gillespie, however, was unable to carry out these plans. The strain of the last few years had been too much for him and upon returning from Clifton Springs he was soon forced to take his bed, with a condition of high nervousness caused by hypothyroidism. Gillespie did not realize the seriousness of his condition. He was ordered to take a rest cure of several weeks in bed, in the beginning of 1928. During this time he wrote Dr. Brantley regarding a similar experience he had had after the Educational Campaign in Kentucky and added, "I suppose its return is due to my having allowed myself to become too much absorbed in

---

[42] Ibid.

the program of the Seminary for the past three years, with no diversion or recreation."[43] Dr. McPheeters wrote Brantley about the same time that the doctors had described Gillespie to him as "a very sick man".[44] The outcome of this was that within the next three months, Gillespie underwent two operations for the removal of part of the thyroid gland, and was incapacitated until the following summer when he began to take up his work again.

It was a source of great regret to Gillespie that he was unable to attend the Centennial celebration of the Seminary at the 1928 Commencement. The General Assembly had been invited to the Central Church, Atlanta, as part of this celebration. The gavel used in the Assembly was made of wood from both the old campus and the new, and in presenting the gavel to Dr. Harris E. Kirk, the moderator, Dr. J. B. Green of the faculty said,

> It is eminently fitting that you should preside over this Court of the church with a gavel presented by Columbia Seminary . . . The union in this gavel of wood from the old and new campuses is meant to represent to you and the General Assembly the relation of the Columbia of the present to the Columbia of the past. They are not divided; the old continues in the new and the new is "carrying on" in the spirit of the old, seeking to give to its aims and ideals larger fulfillment.[45]

---

[43]Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, February 10, 1928, In Seminary Files, D-8.

[44]Letter of W. M. McPheeters to J. T. Brantley, February 6, 1928, In Seminary Files, D-8.

[45]Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 21:4, July 1928.

The centennial was featured with addresses and sermons were delivered by prominent alumni. The Baccalaureate sermon was preached Sunday morning, May 20th, by Dr. A. M. Fraser of Staunton, Virginia, and the Sermon before the Society of Missionary Inquiry that night by Dr. A. B. Curry of Memphis. On Monday evening the alumni banquet was held, honoring Dr. W. M. McPheeters, at which time a silver loving cup was presented to him on the fortieth anniversary of his Professorship. On Tuesday afternoon, the centennial address was made in the Seminary chapel by Dr. J. Sprole Lyons of Atlanta, followed by the dedication of the Virginia Orme Campbell Memorial buildings. On the same evening, at the Central Church, Dr. W. C. Robinson was inaugurated Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Polity, and announcement was made of the election of Dr. H. B. Blakely to the chair of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. On the same evening, Dr. S. L. Morris, alumnus of the Seminary and for many years Secretary of Home Missions for the Assembly, delivered an address on Columbia Seminary's contribution to the Missionary enterprise. The graduation exercises of the Seminary took place on the following morning, thus concluding the event for which the Seminary leaders had been planning for many months.[46]

---

[46] Cf. Christian Observer, May 16, 1928, p. 10. In Personal Files, T-23.

Relation with other Seminaries. With the establishment of the Seminary in Decatur and the celebration of the Centennial, Columbia was launched on her second century of service. All along, Gillespie had acted under a sense of Divine guidance in the removal. Writing as early as 1925, he had said,

> It is my opinion that the hand of Providence has been controlling the destiny of Columbia Seminary and shaping the movements in the various Synods, which has resulted in the final action to go to Atlanta . . . I do not believe that anyone can claim to have fathered the movement. I believe it has developed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and that He is directing the destiny of this great institution for which He has such large fields of service and such unparalleled opportunity.[47]

The further along the program went, the more firmly Gillespie was convinced of its Divine purpose, even when many unforeseen obstacles began to arise after the move. In taking this position Gillespie committed himself to the sectional system of theological seminaries for the church. This conviction is expressed in a letter to a fellow minister where he says,

> I feel that our seminaries are now well distributed and that each of them has a territory of its own sufficient to engage all of its time and strength. I think the greatest work of our seminaries is to train the men from their own territory and to give them back to the territory which supports the institution. I feel

---

[47]Letter of R.T.G. to S. W. McGill, May 15, 1925. In Seminary Files, B-1.

> that the men from each one of our five Synods would be of greater service to the Church in this section, and to the churches as a whole if they would take their training in Columbia and be in a position and the spirit to return to the fields in which they live and have an interest. Feeling as I do about the men in our own territory, of course it is a logical inference that I think it is better for men of other Synods to attend the Seminary which is supported by their own Synod.[48]

Gillespie sought conscientiously to stand by this position and there are several letters in his files where he advised prospective students to enter the Seminaries of which they were constituents.[49] Typical of these letters is one in which he says to a student,

> If you are planning to spend the remainder of your life in Texas or the far West, I think it would be better for you to take your course at Austin, as this will bring you into closer touch with the movements of that section and will create in your own mind the attitude which is characteristic of that community.[50]

Another witness of his consistency was the zeal with which he labored for Louisville Seminary while living in that territory, even though an alumnus of Columbia. At the time of his leaving Louisville, the President of that institution had written him,

> . . . We cannot let you go without expressing to you our sincere appreciation for all that you have done for us

---

[48]Letter of R.T.G. to W. Scott Moore, In Seminary Files, F-6.

[49]Cf. Letters In Seminary Files, A-5, A-10, B-9, XBB-1.

[50]Letter of R.T.G. to M. C. Yeargan, August 16, 1927, In Seminary Files, A-10.

> and meant to us. We can never forget the great part you have taken for the cause of Christian Education in Kentucky and for our own institution in particular. Our whole future will be, in a measure, the beneficiary of what you have wrought here. We shall miss your counsels too and not least of all your lofty and unselfish spirit.[51]

After his death, a memorial scholarship was established in his name at Louisville.

He was always eager to maintain and promote the best of spirit between the different institutions. Writing to a Professor in another Seminary he said,

> . . . In my judgment there is no reason why any unwholesome rivalry should exist between the Seminaries, neither should there be a competition which will cause unrest and unhappiness. We all have enough and more than enough to keep us busy if we do these tasks at our own door.[52]

Gillespie had a clear conception of what Columbia's contribution to the church should be. He spoke frequently in his correspondence of his territory as the "Cotton Belt," and it was his earnest desire that Columbia should supply the church in that section of the Southland with the leadership which she needed. Concerning this he says,

> The leaders of the church are striving to build up here in the Cotton Belt a training school for ministers which will be in close touch with our section, understand the problems which are common to the churches in this section, and which will in the future provide an adequate and well trained ministry.[53]

---

[51] Letter of John M. Vander Meulen to R.T.G., December 13, 1924. In Personal Files, T-24.

[52] Letter of R.T.G. to A. W. Blackwood, June 5, 1925, In Seminary Files, E-3.

[53] Letter of R.T.G. to R. M. Buchannan, June 28, 1927, In Seminary Files, XBB-4.

He was constantly thinking in terms of the Church's expansion, and he thought of the Seminary as a vital part of the evangelistic and missionary program of any section. He was also anxious that the Seminary might serve the church in other ways. It was his desire some day to build a row of houses for returned missionaries, and he named one part of the campus Mission Terrace and set it apart for that purpose.[54] On one occasion an old woman of limited means gave him a five-dollar gold piece to be used as he saw fit. He conceived the idea of building what he called the "Five Dollar House" which was to be the first house on Mission Terrace, and he published some literature to that effect. With the help of a friend, he secured several hundred dollars for that purpose, but because of financial conditions the matter was never finished. Another idea which he hoped some day to carry out was the establishment of a training school for lay workers, both men and women, who did not care to become regular pastors and preachers, but for whom there were places of special need in the church.[55] No field where the Seminary could be of service to the church seemed too remote to be a possibility of achievement with him.

Academic changes. It has already been noticed that

---

[54]Cf. Letter In Seminary Files, H-8.

[55]Cf. Letter In Seminary Files, CC-5.

at the centennial a new professor was inaugurated in the Chair of Church History, and that announcement was made of the election of a new professor in the department of New Testament. This was made necessary by the death of two of the Seminary's oldest professors in the period before the removal. Dr. R. C. Reed who had been professor of Church History for twenty-seven years died unexpectedly in the summer of 1925. Before his death, he had intimated that W. C. Robinson, one of his former students, was his choice as a successor. At the time, Robinson was pastor in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Gillespie soon began a correspondence with him concerning the matter, and the outcome was that he was elected by the Board and spent a year in the Harvard Graduate School before taking up his new duties in September 1927. In indicating the way in which he wanted the chair filled, Gillespie wrote Robinson that it was his desire to have a man who had a breadth of scholarship and was familiar with the modern methods of approach to the study of history, but who at the same time would be faithful to the conservative view and could combine with it a warm-hearted evangelical passion.[56] During the two-year interim between Reed and Robinson, the chair was filled by Dr. C. C. McNeill of Savannah, as Acting Professor.

---

[56] Letter of R.T.G. to W. C. Robinson, November 18, 1925, In Seminary Files, CC-3.

The other vacancy in the faculty was caused by the death in 1926 of Dr. Harry Alexander White, who since 1902 had been Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. Gillespie realized the importance of this chair from a theological point of view, and in his effort to keep Columbia in the conservative heritage he was very careful in the selection of his man. Writing to the New Testament Professor of another Seminary, he said,

> I believe the whole church will agree that no department is at this time of more vital importance than New Testament Exegesis, since it is there that the liberal element has concentrated its attack. We are exceedingly anxious therefore, to make this department as strong and secure as it is possible.[56]

For this Chair, Gillespie sought out Hunter B. Blakely, who had done graduate work in New Testament under A. T. Robertson of Louisville. At the time, he was pastor of the United Presbyterian Church of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Blakely did not desire to leave the pastorate, but after much persuasion Gillespie prevailed upon him early in 1927 to accept the Chair, and arranged for him to take a year and a half's study abroad to prepare for his work. During this interim the duties of the Chair were divided between the various professors, and Blakely came to the Seminary in the fall of 1928. After two years in the Seminary, Blakely's desire to reenter the pastorate was granted by

---

[56]Letter of R.T.G. to J. Gresham Machen, November 8, 1926, In Seminary Files, E-13.

the Board, as they released him from the duties of his Chair. One of Gillespie's last official acts was to approve in 1930 the Board's election of S. A. Cartledge, as Associate Professor in this department.

Another contribution which Gillespie made to the academic work of the Seminary was the revision of the schedule and reorganization of the courses of study. The result of this change was to increase the school year from thirty-three weeks to thirty-six, and to divide the year into three terms with recitations in the same subjects every day five days in the week. This made possible a better sequence of courses and allowed for greater concentration of effort.[57]

During his administration there were courses which Gillespie was anxious to add but which he was unable to do because of inadequate funds. He himself had been appointed to the department of Practical Theology when called to the Presidency, but his administrative duties made it impossible for him ever to do any teaching. One chair which he was especially anxious to establish was that of Religious Education, and there are frequent references to this in correspondence. In his last report to the Board in 1930 he said,

---

[57] Cf. Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 19:1-12, January 1927.

> At the earliest possible date a chair of Christian Education should be established. Every effort should be made to find sufficient endowment to make possible the establishment of this department.[58]

In connection with this department of work, it was his hope eventually to establish some kind of system of internship, by which a man could have an extra year of practical experience under Seminary direction before being ordained.[59] He was always anxious to provide opportunities for extra study to men of special promise, and during his Presidency he secured the gift of the Anna Church Whitner Fellowship, providing a year of special study to a man chosen each year by the faculty. He was also interested in establishing an extension department but felt that it was impossible at the time.[60]

During Gillespie's administration, the lectures on the Thomas Smythe Foundation were continued each year, and as President of the Seminary, Gillespie had an important part in helping select the lecturers and in making arrangements with them. Between 1925 and 1930, the speakers and their subjects were as follows:

1925 A. M. Fraser D.D., Staunton, Virginia. Subject: Church Unity.

---

[58]President's Report in Board Minutes, 1930.

[59]Cf. Letter In Seminary Files, F-2.

[60]Cf. Letter In Seminary Files, G-12.

1926 Samuel L. Morris D.D., Atlanta, Georgia. Subject: The Fact of Christianity.

1927 J. Gresham Machen D.D., Princeton, New Jersey. Subject: The Virgin Birth.

1928 Charles R. Erdman D.D., Princeton, New Jersey. Subject: The Life of D. L. Moody.

1929 William T. Ellis, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Subject: Explorations and adventures in Bible Lands.

1930 William C. Covert, D.D., LL.D., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Subject: Worship and Spiritual Culture.

The last set of lectures was published soon after Gillespie's death, under the title Christ and Culture and were dedicated to him with this inscription: "To the memory of the late Richard T. Gillespie, D.D., whose cultural ideals enriched life and gave moral momentum to the Christian program."[61]

A final phase of the academic work which deserves mention was Gillespie's constant effort to deepen the spiritual life of the Seminary. He sought to do this by working through the student leaders on the campus, and also by bringing to the campus outside speakers for devotional services. With the opening of the Seminary in Decatur, he inaugurated the plan of having some outstanding preacher come to conduct a week of services which were concluded with an early Communion Service the first Sunday of the school

---

[61] William C. Covert, Christ and Culture, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1930), 91 pp.

year. Writing to the minister who had conducted the first of these series of services he said,

> Under the leadership of the Senior class volunteer plans are being made, the object of which is to secure an enrichment of the spiritual life on the Campus, to deepen the sense of responsibility in the vocation to which we are called, and to magnify the importance of the Commission which we have received of our Lord. The whole student body is reacting splendidly to this fine leadership, and I predict for the future campus ideals and influences which will lift the students on this campus to a new plane of life, which we have not heretofore attained.[62]

Work with the students. One of Gillespie's major contributions to the life of the Seminary was his work with the students. All of his previous ministry had been characterized by a personal and pastoral interest in his people and he carried this same spirit into his work with the members of the student body. He dealt with them on a personal basis, and brought them to feel that their problems were his problems as well. One of the students writing concerning him said,

> Words are inadequate to tell you what he has come to mean to me. Just meeting him on the campus never fails to make a day brighter because he has a remarkable way of putting hope and faith into men. I had never dreamed that a man could be so concerned over every student as he is. All the men know this and it means that to a man they love him with a devotion that is wonderful.[63]

---

[62]Letter of R.T.G. to W. Ray Dobyns, September 22, 1927, In Seminary Files, D-1.

[63]Letter of Ansley C. Moore to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, October 3, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-7.

Another student, in writing him shortly before his death, said, "Your fine spirit and superabundant willingness to do the best thing for each student is to my mind the most striking feature in connection with the Seminary as I have seen it."[64]

Gillespie's attitude as expressed by himself is seen in the following letter to an entering student,

> From now on until your course is finished I want you to count me as your friend, and to call on me freely for advice and help in any matters where you need the council of an older person. I have dedicated my life to the training of young men for the ministry, and to the development of the educational movement in our church, and I am anxious to serve in every possible way.[65]

Writing on another occasion to a graduate, he said, "You will never know the bond of friendship and love which I feel for the men who have gone out from Columbia Seminary since I have been President."[66]

Gillespie always held an exalted view of his calling, and in every way possible sought to secure the same spirit in the students. In an address to a graduating class, he said,

> In my own ministry I have taken Samuel for my ideal, and for my motto have chosen his words, spoken

---

[64] Letter of Wallace Alston to R.T.G., May 24, 1930. In Seminary Files, A-2.

[65] Letter of R.T.G. to W. H. Dendy, April 13, 1925. In Seminary Files, A-5.

[66] Letter of R.T.G. to J. A. Flannagan, June 12, 1926, In Seminary Files, A-4.

> when he relinquished to Saul his place of leadership in civil matters and turned wholly to the duties of his prophetic office: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, and I will teach you the true and the right way." I commend the words of this prophet to you as a worthy and helpful motto.

He reminded them that even as a prophet's task was to teach, so a Christian minister must be a teacher, and that God's people would ever look to them for guidance in "the true and the right way." To fulfill their task they must themselves be students, and they must be men of prayer. "Prayer should occupy a large place in a minister's life, as it did with Samuel. . . . Prayer keeps the heart warm, brings one close to God, and releases the mightiest forces in the universe. He also urged them to be good pastors, reminding them that in so doing they would become better preachers.

> In some places and with some ministers pastoral work is considered old fashioned, and some have abandoned it. But the pastoral office is divinely appointed, and there is today as always, for the faithful, efficient pastor, a large and fruitful field. In your ministry magnify your pastoral office.

His final word in this message was to remind them that they were ambassadors of Christ, and to urge them to exalt Him to a place of preeminence in their life and work.[67]

Also in his correspondence with them, both as students and as alumni, he sought to give them helpful encouragement and advice. The subjects in these files cover

---

[67] "The President to the Graduating Class," Bulletin Columbia Theological Seminary, 18:6-8, July 1925.

every phase of a minister's life and work. Among these are the importance of meeting financial obligations promptly, of making adequate pulpit preparation, of being faithful in pastoral work, and of having a spirit of self denial and a willingness to serve. He sometimes went into a practical detail of the work, as in the following advice to a student in a country charge for the summer,

> I am glad to hear from you and to know that you are making a start with the organizations of your church. I would suggest that you stress especially work with your young people and with the Sunday School. It is here that you show best results.
>
> You will probably be discouraged in your efforts to organize the Men-of-the-Church. Older men are slow to enter into such organizations. Your greatest encouragement will come from younger men of the community. During the summer you might use such occasions as a fish fry or fish stew, which I suspect is popular in that section. Another day might be spent cleaning up around the church and putting the church property in good order. The ladies would no doubt serve a lunch on the grounds and you could make a day of it. This will have to be done after the crops are laid by. It would be unwise to ask men to leave their farms during the busy season. Probably an afternoon with lunch at twilight would be better.[69]

At other times his advice was more general, as in the following,

---

[68]Cf. Letters In Seminary Files, A-2, A-6, A-7, A-9, A-10, A-11, C-3, E-13, G-13.

[69]Letter of R.T.G. to R. V. Sapp, June 12, 1929, In Seminary Files, A-10.

> . . . Be sure to remember that you must be a friend to your people and never overlook a family or an individual in distress. Join with them in their pleasures, and enter wholeheartedly into the life of the community. Try at all times to present a neat appearance and be sure that on Sunday you are well prepared. If you will do this I am sure you will have no trouble.[70]

Since Gillespie kept his family in a dormitory apartment, and had meals in the refectory, he developed an even more intimate contact with the students, to whom the doors of his home and office were always open. One of the students in whom Gillespie had taken a special interest wrote the family after his death,

> The entire student body will be grieved to learn of the loss of him to the Seminary. No one will ever fill his place and give to Columbia a sacrificial life such as he gave her. I feel the loss a great deal more than any member of the student body for I was very close to him and loved him so much. I appreciate so much everything he did for me and will carry with me all my life the cherished memories of one whom I loved as a son would love his father.[71]

Financial difficulties. The three years of Gillespie's Presidency in Decatur were marked by extreme difficulty in securing adequate finances for operating the Seminary. The expense of moving the Columbia equipment to Decatur, for which no fund had been provided; the increased cost of operation in the new plant; the increased student

---

[70] Letter of R.T.G. to E. F. Lothery, June 8, 1929, In Seminary Files, A-6.

[71] Letter of R. V. Sapp to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, June 2, 1930, In Personal Files, T-25.

body, requiring more scholarship aid; and the shrinkage in collection of the campaign pledges were all responsible for this difficulty, and resulted in an annual deficit averaging between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars for these years.[72] In addition to this, the building program was expanded to include four faculty residences, which along with the other extras made necessary a bonded debt of $100,000 on the buildings. At one time during these years the total indebtedness of the Seminary was over $200,000 though this was reduced to something over $100,000 at the time of Gillespie's death by gifts from various sources.[73] This was a problem which was constantly before Gillespie, and writing early in 1928 to one of his fellow workers in the removal campaign, he said,

> We are well established in the Seminary, and the work is going splendidly. The only thing now which gives me concern is how to finance the Institution to carry on its every day work, to meet the interest on the money we have borrowed, and to take care of the sinking fund which must be started in the next three years. I suppose however we will be able to work out some plan by which this can be done.[74]

---

[72] Cf. Seminary Files, I-8.

[73] Cf. Board Minutes, 1927-1930.

[74] Letter of R.T.G. to S. W. McGill, February 13, 1928, In Seminary Files, D-4.

Gillespie had hoped that during this year he might be able to launch a Centennial Fund to take care of these needs, but his illness early in the year prevented his doing this. During his illness, he urged members of the faculty and Board to take steps in this direction in order to provide sufficient endowment for operating the Seminary without deficits.[75] The time was not propitious, however, for the launching of another large campaign. The fact is, Gillespie had already realized the difficulty of projecting any more Every Member Campaigns such as they had conducted in the past, and he had earlier written Dr. McGill that he believed that from now on most of the money would have to be secured from individual solicitation of large givers.[76] He spent much of his time in the next two years on the road in this kind of work, and on one occasion he wrote the President of the Board, "My health is good and I do not mind the work, though it is tedious and requires a great deal of patience. The only thing I dislike is to be away from home continuously."[77] In his report to the Board in 1927, he had said he did not think it was wise for the Seminary to plan

---

[75] Cf. Letter In Seminary Files, D-8.

[76] Letter of R.T.G. to S. W. McGill, August 10, 1927, In Seminary Files, D-6.

[77] Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, August 12, 1929, In Seminary Files, G-6.

its future on the basis of an annual "hat collection", and that the President should be called upon to spend his time in a house to house canvass for funds, "but", he added, "in an emergency such as confronts us in this transition period, you will find your President ready to serve in any capacity and to give his time in any way which to the Board may seem necessary and wise. [78]

One more attempt was made during Gillespie's life to improve the financial condition of the Seminary. It was a campaign conducted by Dr. S. W. McGill in January 1930, known as the "Setting Columbia Free Campaign." The purpose was to raise $200,000 in Atlanta to pay off the Seminary's indebtedness.[79] However the country was just entering the initial stages of depression after the stock market crash of 1929, and the campaign was a failure. In spite of its failure, Gillespie did not lose hope, and shortly before his death he wrote to the President of the Board,

> I am greatly disappointed that the campaign in Atlanta came so near being an utter failure. But I am not discouraged . . . I have great faith in Columbia's future, and I have confidence that we shall be able to work out our problems in some way.[80]

---

[78] President's Report in Board Minutes, 1927.

[79] Cf. Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 23:1-12, January 1930.

[80] Letter of R.T.G. to J. T. Brantley, April 29, 1930, In Seminary Files, G-18.

The end. In the spring of 1930, Gillespie was stricken unexpectedly with a streptococcus infection of the throat. For a time it looked as if he would not survive it, but he responded to the serum and was able to be up in time for Commencement. However, he was still an unwell man, and one of his Board Members has spoken of that occasion as follows:

> I can see him now as he stood at the beginning of his Presidency - a young man with a strong, agile and alert body, and a quick and ready step; with a clear, keen and logical mind; with a vision that was brilliant with the richest hopes; and an enthusiasm that was freely fed from the exuberance of youth . . . Again I see him as he called me to the rear of this chapel, just after the graduating exercises of 1930, and threw his head on my shoulder and poured out the inner feelings of his heart to me. His task was done and he had sacrificed all for the attainment of his ideals and he stood like a wounded veteran.[81]

Shortly after his death, which came while he was attending the General Assembly in Charlottesville, Virginia, one of his former colleagues wrote the family concerning him,

> I often said that he gave too richly of himself. This attitude however bound us to him with hoops of steel. It must have been the day he died that I was reading of one who with great heroic effort had given his life. In appreciating her husband his wife said of him, "he always gave everything he had, and when at last it was necessary to give his life, he also gladly

---

[81] E. L. Hill, "Dr. Gillespie, the Executive and Administrator," Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:5-6, November 1930.

gave that." Richard and this man were glad comrades in a great redemptive fellowship.[82]

---

[82]Benjamin Jay Bush to Mrs. R. T. Gillespie, June 2, 1930. In Personal Files, T-26.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

There is a place in the Old Testament where it is stated that "the Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon" in performing a certain piece of work.[1] There now remain to be set down a few concluding observations on the life of this modern Gideon, Richard T. Gillespie, with whom the Spirit of the Lord so evidently clothed itself in the work of Christian Education.

First. This study has brought out the broad extent of the field of Christian Education. Gillespie made his contribution, not in one way, but in many ways: as father, as pastor, as minister of the Word and as administrator, doing each day with all his might that which his hands found to do. Most of all he made his contribution by the example of a Godly life, yielded to the love of Christ. This study has shown that the field of Christian Education is not limited to a program in the local church, but that it touches every area of life and involves the whole work of the church and the ministry. It involves not only the work of the Sunday Church School, but the

---

[1]Judges 6:34a, Marginal Translation.

pastoral work in the home, and the work in the pulpit and community as well. It involves also the work of all the agencies of the church, including her missions and her schools, and requires an adequate correlation of these agencies that the work might be done more effectively. Indeed this study has borne out a statement made by Pope Pius XI. that "Christian Education comprehends the whole sphere of human life, both earthly and spiritual, both intellectual and moral, both individual, domestic and social; not to diminish it in any way, but to elevate, regulate and perfect it, according to the example and doctrine of Christ."[2]

Second. This study has emphasized the strategic place which the minister holds in the field of Christian Education. It is obvious that too much of the church's Educational work has been left in the hands of a lay leadership inadequately trained. Gillespie's life has shown that this is a responsibility which should be assumed by the minister himself, and that if the objectives of Christian Education are to be realized, he must be found at the center of the educational program, guiding those techniques by which the claims of the Gospel can be brought to bear on the modern life of today.

---

[2]Pope Pius XI Encyclical Letter on "Christian Education of Youth," Rome, December 31, 1929.

This study has also tended to emphasize the importance of personality in the educational process, for if the minister must be at the center of the educational program, it follows that the whole program will be influenced by his personality. This fact has been seen in the frequent quotations from those upon whom Gillespie left the impress of his life. It brings to mind the familiar picture of an ideal university: "a log with Mark Hopkins on one end and a student on the other."

Another fact which has been brought out in this connection is the part which heredity and environment have in the shaping of life. On reflection it is seen that Gillespie gave more emphasis to the realization of certain of the objectives stated in Chapter I than to others, and that this emphasis was largely determined by his heritage and his training.

There is also a warning in this connection for those who are in the ministry. The very extensiveness of the field and the importance of the minister's place in it creates a danger to the man who is truly conscientious. It is that he will let his zeal consume him, and under the stress of modern conditions will soon break down in his labors. Who knows? Gillespie might have been spared to a longer usefulness had he learned to play, and had he taken more regard for his health with rest and relaxation.

Third. This study has brought out in the writer's mind the need of a positive theology in the work of Christian Education. Gillespie, as has been seen, was a strict adherent of the Calvinistic system, and while he might have given more credence to insights from other points of view, yet the writer is convinced that the fruitfulness of his father's work was due in large measure to the fact that his life was based on a definite theology.

It has already been observed in Chapter I that the influence of empirical philosophy has been felt in the field of Christian Education.[3] While there have been certain advantages in this, in providing scientific methods and techniques, yet there are dangers which should be recognized. One of these has been the tendency to discredit philosophy and theology in favor of an emphasis on activity. It has created anew the old problem of content versus form with recent emphasis on the latter. Too often of late those who have shaped the church's educational program have been highly trained in the techniques of education but have lacked the philosophical and theological foundation necessary to give content to their methods. The result of this may

---

[3] Vide supra, pp. 3-4.

be seen in the confusion of thought and action which is found in the modern church, and as one leader has put it,

> We have a vast body of youth today, encompassed on all sides by meaninglessness and futility, listening for authoritative voices, and bracing itself for a crusade without knowing where to go, without knowing even whose sepulchre to redeem from pagan foes.[4]

The writer is of the opinion that to meet the needs of youth today the church's educational program must be based on a theology that will give it coherence and unity and that will keep the church true to her divine mission. He agrees with Professor Brightman of Boston that

> Results of science are of utmost importance to Religious Education. They reveal effective mechanisms of the control of experience. But he who studies these mechanisms without studying the extra-scientific assumptions made by all moral and religious beliefs and experiences will be out of contact with religious realities; he may be practical but his work will be shallow and empty. He will be like a contractor who has materials for building, but no architect's plans.[5]

Fourth. Another result of this study is a heightened conception of the church and her importance in the world. It has been noted throughout how much of Gillespie's work was in and through the church. All of his life was spent in the church. He loved the church and gave himself

---

[4]John A. Mackay, "The Restoration of Theology", Religion in Life, 6:164-172, Spring Number 1937.

[5]Edgar S. Brightman, Religious Values (New York: The Abington Press, 1925) p. 248.

unreservedly for the advancement of her cause. The writer feels that the relevance of the church to world issues has even been increased since his father's death, for it is largely since that time that the totalitarian states with their pagan idealogies have spread with such amazing rapidity as to offer a serious challenge to Christendom. Dr. John A. Mackay faced this fact in a realistic way in his inaugural address as President of Princeton Seminary in 1937. He agreed with John Macmurrey of London, that the major problem of contemporary civilization lies in the realm of community, and that

> Only a community of love, as closely knit together as communities of race and class and tradition, and rooted as much as they in a theology of its nature and destiny can withstand Christianity's new rivals and enable the Christian Community to fulfill God's purpose for mankind.[6]

Furthermore he declared that it will take a confessional church to meet the issues of the era ahead, for,

> The Christian Church today, whether it be regarded as a spiritual center against the new totalitarian faiths, or as an ecumenical fellowship which has become real for the first time in the world's history, needs a theology that will give it resistance, strength, communal cohesion and expansive power. It needs the theology that is inherent in the biblical records and the tradition of historic catholic Christianity, a Theology of the Word. The church needs to remember that God has spoken by word and deed on the plane of history. His everlasting "Nay" has sounded against all ultimate loyalty to whatever is not God. Be it Baal or Caesar that

---

[6]John A. Mackay, Loc. Cit.

disputes his Sovereignty, be it his rival the Mammon of Materialism or the Self of Idealism, God alone must be God in the life of men and nations. His everlasting "Yea" has also sounded in Jesus Christ the God-Man. This must the Church also remember for her effective life and service. The God-Man is the starting point and the soul of Christian theology, the center of history and the clue to its meaning, the mirror in which man comes to know himself and God, the Redeemer through faith through whom he is enabled to become what God intended him to be. There is something else the church in our time must remember: her own true character and function as the "bearer of history." Her greatest concern must be to become existentially what she is essentially, that in a fellowship in the spirit, the body of Christ, the expression of his Mind and the organ of his Will. A high doctrine of the church is needed, and a churchly theology, to set in high relief the status of the church as an integral part of ultimate spiritual reality, whose function is to bear witness to the Gospel, God's Will to world fellowship in Jesus Christ.[7]

The writer agrees with this point of view and is convinced that his father's emphasis on the importance of the church was a well-founded one.

Fifth. Another observation which has come to the writer is the importance of the institutions of the church in her life and work. The records have revealed his father's labors for these institutions, especially the schools and colleges. Evidently Gillespie was convinced of their importance or he would not have given so much of his time and efforts to them. It is interesting to note in passing that his major work in behalf of church schools and colleges had its beginning while he was pastor near a state university campus.

---

[7] Ibid.

In this connection, it has been seen that there are other values in church schools besides the providing of training under Christian influence. One is that they serve as centers of interest to which the loyalty of the church can be tied, and which at times can be used to arouse the church to definite action. This has been seen in the case of the removal of Columbia Seminary. The study has revealed that it is essential for an institution to have a constituency large enough and strong enough to support it, and that when it does, the institution becomes a valuable asset to that section of the church.

Another observation in this connection is that church institutions can be used as excellent mediums for creating healthy ties between different branches of the church. In the case of the Kentucky institutions, the joint financial campaign for their support served as the means of drawing Northern and Southern Presbyterians in that state closer together than ever before. It suggests that this might be the line of action along which greater unity can be achieved by the churches in the future, not only in education, but in other phases of the work as well. Gillespie never agitated for church union in any way, but by his example and labors in Kentucky, he did more to achieve a spirit of unity than could ever have been done by agitation. Practical achievements of this type are of far greater value to the cause than

forensic discussions, and the church's institutions of all kinds form a favorable point of contact.

Sixth. This study has been largely limited to the implications in Gillespie's life and work for the field of Christian Education. However, other lines of investigation for further study have suggested themselves. Some of these are:

(1) The effect of a man's theology on his preaching. This might be made a comparative study, using Gillespie as an example from the conservative point of view, and contrasting his sermons with those of some preacher from the liberal school. The study might be made a general one, or it might be limited to some phase of preaching such as the influence of theology on use of the Scriptures, or its influence on the use of illustrations.

(2) The effect of a man's hereditary background on his ministry. Again this might be made a comparative study, taking for instance the approach of a minister born and reared amid the large city influences of some other section as contrasted to the approach of Gillespie, a man reared in a rural and small-town environment of the South. Or another possibility in this connection would be to contrast Gillespie's life and methods of work with those of a man who had come into the ministry by sudden conversion, rather than by

long religious training.

(3) Another problem which this study has suggested is that of the influence of external conditions on both the benevolent and evangelistic programs of the church. Gillespie's great success with financial campaigns was achieved mainly in the decade of the nineteen-twenties, which were "boom" years in many ways. This could scarcely have been done in the nineteen thirties. Also Gillespie, basing his conclusions on past statistics, looked for a large increase in church membership, between 1925 and 1945. Thus far this has not happened. Why? This suggests the possibility of a fruitful investigation.

(4) Another set of problems is suggested in the study of educational institutions. One problem would be a study of the religious ideas and activities of an institution's alumni some years after graduation. It might be possible with the help of certain alumni offices to check these by questionnaire. A comparison of the returns from church school graduates, and those of state schools might offer some worthwhile information. Another possible problem is the actual effect of a Theological Seminary to a certain Synod or locality. An interesting study could probably be worked out comparing the work of the church in South Carolina during the last ten years before Columbia's removal, with the work of the church in Georgia during the

first ten years after the removal.

Seventh. There is one other conclusion which the writer would set down: it is the realization which has come to him as to the Providence of God in the life and work of the church. The work of the church is always greater than any one individual. Many of those mentioned in this thesis, recent leaders in the church, are now gone, but their work continues. At the time of his death, Gillespie held a strategic position in the life of a church institution, and some even expressed misgivings as to its future when he was taken. In the years which have followed, however, the work has gone on, the debts of the institution have all been paid, and the future seems to hold a store of usefulness.

In this study of his father's life and work the writer has had it impressed upon him that the minister exists for the church and not the church for the minister, and he has been often reminded of the saying of Jesus, "other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Brightman, Edgar Sheffield, Religious Values. New York: The Abington Press, 1920. 285 pp.

Covert, William C., Christ and Culture. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1930. 91 pp.

Jones, F. D. and W. H. Mills, editors, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850. Columbia, South Carolina: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1926. 1094 pp.

LaMotte, Louis C., Colored Light. Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1937. 356 pp.

Pratt, James Bissett, The Religious Consciousness, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920. 486 pp.

Quips and Cranks. Davidson College Annual, Vol. VIII, 1904.

Robinson, William C., Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 1831-1931. Decatur, Georgia: Dennis Lindsay Printing Company, Inc., 1931. 233 pp.

Rumple, Jethro A., History of Rowan County, North Carolina. Salisbury, North Carolina: J. J. Bruner, 1881. Republished, Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1929. 428 pp.

Vieth, Paul H., Objectives in Religious Education, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930. 331 pp.

B. BULLETINS

Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 19:1-12, January, 1927.

_____, 23:1-12, January, 1920.

Clark, Melton, "Dr. Gillespie, Pastor and Preacher", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:8-12, November, 1930.

Gillespie, Richard T., "The President to the Graduating Class", Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 18:6-8, July, 1925.

Green, J. B., "The Presentation of the Gavel to Dr. Harrie R. Kirk, Moderator of the General Assembly," Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 21:4, July 1928.

Hill, E. L., "Dr. Gillespie, the Executive and Administrator," Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:5-7, November 1930.

Kentucky Educational Campaign Material. In files of Henry H. Sweets, 410 Urban Building, Louisville, Kentucky.

McPheeters, W. M., "Dr. Gillespie, Student and Man," Bulletin, Columbia Theological Seminary, 24:13-24, November, 1930.

Minutes of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1913, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1924.

Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky, 1921. pp. 11-14.

Name and Family of Gillespie, The, Compiled by the Media Research Bureau, Washington, D.C.

Pius XI, Pope, Encyclical Letter on "Christian Education of Youth," Rome, December 31, 1929.

C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Board Minutes, Columbia Theological Seminary, 1924-1930.

Brock, Louise Gillespie, Unpublished Sketch of Gillespie Ancestry, Fayetteville, North Carolina, 1938. 14 pp.

_____, Unpublished Sketch of Gillespie's Early Home Life. Fayetteville, North Carolina, 1938. 13 pp.

Class Notes on L. M. Thomas, II., November, 1933, Emory University, Ga. In Personal Files of Richard T. Gillespie.

Gillespie, Richard T., Jr. Term Paper. "The Psychology of Adolescence as Related to Religious Education," 1934. In Personal Files of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Thomasville, Georgia.

_____, Term Paper, "The Educational Philosophy and Correlative Educational Scheme of John Calvin," 1934. In Personal Files of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Thomasville, Georgia.

Personal Files, L - T. Correspondence and papers of Richard T. Gillespie, 1907-1930. In Library of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

Personal Scrapbooks, #1,2,3. of Richard T. Gillespie. In possession of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Thomasville, Georgia.

Seminary Files, A-1. Correspondence and papers of Richard T. Gillespie, 1925-1930. In Library of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

Sermon Files of Richard T. Gillespie. In possession of Richard T. Gillespie, Jr., Thomasville, Georgia.

Sessional Records of the First Presbyterian Church, Florence, South Carolina.

Sessional Records of the Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky, 1917.

Sessional Records of the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1910-1920.

D. PERIODICAL AND ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

McKay, John A., "The Restoration of Theology," Religion in Life, 6:164-172, Spring Number, 1937.

Schaff, Philip, A Religious Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal and Practical Theology. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883. II, 674.

E. NEWSPAPERS AND CHURCH PAPERS

Christian Observer, October 3, 1923. May 16, 1928

Courier Journal, Louisville, Kentucky, December 1, 1923, October 27, 1924.